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A Danish case of storytelling and destination development

Larsen, Jacob Roesgaard Kirkegaard; Therkelsen, Anette

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The Tales of Limfjorden

A Danish case of storytelling and destination development



by

Jacob R. Kierkegaard Larsen & Anette Therkelsen

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Kontaktadresse:

Tourism Research Unit
Aalborg Universitet
Fibigerstræde 2
9220 Aalborg Ø
Tlf.: 9635 8080
Fax: 96350044
<http://www.ihis.aau.dk/turisme>

Anette Therkelsens e-mail:
at@ihis.aau.dk

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1. Background

1.1. Introduction

In several Danish destinations,¹ guided tours are now provided with more focus on “telling a story” rather than merely presenting a flow of talk studded with historical information. Thus, storytellers seem to have entered the tourism stage as a supplement to the more traditional tourist guide by offering a much more personal form of guidance where point of departure is taken in the group of listeners by delivering stories with an emotional appeal – dramatic, horrifying or funny stories etc. – with the aim of engaging the audience and transforming historical and cultural information into a good story – into an experience. The stories are seemingly told in what appears a classical form of storytelling, having a teller deliver a story orally to a group of listeners, and appears to be the most representative way of using storytelling within Danish tourism.

This is also the case at destinations around the fiord *Limfjorden* where a number of different actors under a common brand – “*The Tales of Limfjorden*” (TL) – tell stories related to local characteristics. The stories are subdivided in the 5 following themes: history, nature, craft and industry, the maritime and temptations, and through these stories the listeners are offered: “*a unique glimpse into the nature, history and culture of the Land of Limfjorden*” (Netværk Limfjorden, 2009, p. 2 [own translation, JRKL]). Hence, a case study of TL is believed to be utterly relevant in order to shed light on how storytelling is understood and implemented within a Danish tourism context – what makes a good story, how is it told and in what way does it differ from a “traditional” guided tour?

Furthermore, TL stories are in 2009 told for the 5th season and seem like a well-established tourism product and consequently the present case study of TL will be able to provide an understanding of storytelling based on the years of practical experiences that the actors’ and stakeholders’ have gained through the application of storytelling in relation to product and destination development.

The TL product is established within a geographical area that stretches in to two political regions, it involves a number of local destinations and furthermore includes many different actors and stakeholders, and it seems relevant to use a common product concept such as storytelling in order to establish a clearly defined framework for joining forces in relation to developing tourism within the area. The product is managed within the framework of a cooperative network and therefore issues on the organization and cooperation within the network of Limfjorden will be taken into consideration during this case study.

While Limfjorden is located closely to the coast of the North Sea and thereby situated next to tourism dominated areas with a large share of holiday houses, accounting for a considerable part of the yearly overnight stays in Denmark, the coastline of the fiord itself seems to lack major tourist attractions to encourage more holiday stays. The purpose of telling stories is to create a product that

¹ See: “*Good Stories in the Land of Light*” (www.toppenafdanmark.com); “*The Culture of Manor Houses*” (www.visitdjursland.com), “*Gode historier i Søhøjlandet*” (www.visitskanderborg.dk), “*Ghost Walking at Sønderborg Castle*” (www.visitsonderborg.dk), and guided city walks with telling of stories in Ribe (www.visitribe.dk), Viborg (www.visitviborg.dk) and Silkeborg (www.visitsilkeborg.dk).

would make people aware of the qualities of Limfjorden in order to make them want to move around the area and at best spend their entire vacation there² and this makes it highly relevant to study how the concept of storytelling is understood and practised by the individual actor as well as in the network in general with reference to destination development.

The distances between the different local destinations around the fiord are highly manageable, notably by car, and the destinations with lack of attractive tourism accommodations such as holiday houses may instead endeavour to profit from day-trip excursions. At the same time one could imagine that it would be beneficial for the areas with a high intensity of holiday cottages to expand the offerings, i.e. tourist activities and attractions, to make it even more desirable for tourist stays. In other words, there seems to be a potential for widespread tourism cooperation that includes local destinations and tourism actors across the entire area of Limfjorden in order to create a flow of tourists between the local destinations, which seemingly is also one of the intentions behind TL:

“Of course, you could choose to go on one or more of the tales within the area of your vacation – but you’re also given the opportunity to follow 5 different routes across the length and breadth of the entire land of Limfjorden.” (Netværk Limfjorden, 2009, p. 2 [Own translation, JRKL])

In that way, storytelling appears as an overall product frame that aims at integrating different destinations and actors across the inlet area and consequently at creating the opportunity for the tourist to experience more of Limfjorden than the limited site chosen for a vacation stay. This makes it highly relevant to investigate whether the concept is built around single or integrated stories in order to shed light on whether the product encourages tourists to follow a “route of tales”.

Thus, the aim of the present case study is to investigate the understanding and application of storytelling within the context TL with focus on the overall development of a storytelling tourist product and organizational matters in order to illuminate whether TL is instrumental in building Limfjorden as a destination.

1.2. Method

Preliminary studies were carried out in form of a meeting with the coordinator, and desk research by exploring the product website and promotional pamphlet which gave a basic insight into the network and its product concluding in a background description of the Danish case.

The primary research contains 12 in-depth interviews with stakeholders, actors and storytellers together with participant observations of 6 story arrangements. Besides considering the aim of the case description, selection of interviewees as well as the observed stories also had to bear in mind that a widespread geographical coverage had to be fulfilled in order to gain the acceptance of the involved tourism partners at the network of Limfjorden, which means that the overall picture of the gathered information reflects an intention of representing all local destinations.

Interviews at stakeholder level included the management of the network association and the coordination of TL (i.e. present and former product coordinators and members of the committee) together with stakeholders at destination level (tourist agencies - one from each political region). In

² Jørgen Hansen, p. 1

relation to the particular stories, actors – i.e. the management of the storytelling company – and storytellers were interviewed and observations made in the same locations which should provide the opportunity to compare the actors' perceptions with the researcher's own experience. Some of the interviewees furthermore represent several levels – one of them being member of the committee, manager of a storytelling location and storyteller.

The stories were selected with reference to coverage of each of the 5 themes and pursuing stories that from its description appeared either characteristic or different in some sense. Furthermore, some of last year's top stories in terms of number of visitors were chosen in order to illuminate if any common characteristics have an effect on its draw of visitors.

Below interviewees are specified by name and occupation in the network is listed together with the main topics in the interviews. This is followed by a list of the observed stories.

1.2.1. Interview persons:

Stakeholders – questions both on cooperative and organizational perspectives of the network and about storytelling as a means to generate tourism, the understanding of storytelling and how it is put in to practice:

- Gitte Skoubo – product coordinator, vice-president of the network committee
- Jørgen Hansen, press and communication secretary, former product coordinator and manager of the network secretariat
- Lars Enevold – Manager of VisitNordjylland, the former network secretariat; Jenny Holm, employee at VisitNordjylland and present assessor at committee meetings in the network association of Limfjorden.
- Dina Overgaard, Director of Tourism, The Tourism Agency of Lemvig
- Linda Dyrby Pedersen, Employee at the Tourist Office in Fjerritslev and responsible for TL on behalf of the Tourism Agencies in Jammerbugt.
- Susanne Overgaard, Member of the executive committee in the Network of Limfjorden

Actors and storytellers – primarily questions about storytelling; how it is understood, practiced and might be developed further in the future:

- Susanne Overgaard, Head of The Historical Museum of Morsland (Nykøbing Mors) and storyteller
- Anna Noe Bovin, storyteller at The Monastery of Dueholm (The Historical Museum of Morsland)
- Chresten, Voluntary storyteller at The Museum of Limfjorden, Løgstør
- Christian Konge, temporary responsible for the TL-story at The Museum of Limfjorden, Løgstør
- Henrik Kjær Bach, Nature Counselor (The Danish Administration of Forest and Nature) and storyteller at Thy National Park.

- Dan Hansen, storyteller and responsible for the TL-story at The Open-air Museum of Hjerl Hede
- N.H. Lindhart, owner of and storyteller at The Dairy of Aabybro

1.2.2. Participant observations:

Observation	Story title, actor and number	Theme
#1:	<i>"The fairytale of an industry"</i> , The Danish Museum of Foundry (no. 26)	Craft and Industry
#2:	<i>"The City Heart"</i> , The Historical Museum of Morsland, Nykøbing Mors (no.22)	Maritime
#3:	<i>"A sail through the Channel of Frederic VII"</i> The Museum of Limfjorden, Løgstør (no. 21)	Maritime
#4:	<i>"The National Park of Thy"</i> , The Danish Administration of Forest and Nature (no. 7)	Nature
#5	<i>"Hjerl Hede – The nature and 'rakkere'"</i> , The Open-air Museum of Hjerl Hede (no. 11)	History
#6	<i>"Cheese, ice cream and butter - grand traditions at the Dairy of Aabybro"</i> , The Dairy of Aabybro (no. 30)	Temptations

The participant observations were carried through as "ordinary member" of the group of listeners in order to reduce the disturbance of the researcher's presence as much as possible to obtain an objective impression of especially participant behavior. For this reason no pictures were taken and no tape recordings made of the content and form of the stories which could have been interesting proofs to investigate story composition, story properties and surroundings further. Seeing that the researcher didn't match the typical visitor segment and interviews in some occasions had to be made before the story arrangement, the storytellers were undoubtedly aware of the presence of the researcher but it is judged that it had no influence on the outcome of the observations.

1.2.3. Secondary information

Additional to the field research, secondary information have been gathered through desk research in form of promotional pamphlets (2005 + 2009), the network website and a number of internal documents such as meeting minutes, list of stakeholders and content of the TL information portfolio and product guidelines. Furthermore, internal statistics, in form of the slides presented at the annual evaluation 2008, have been used to estimate the numbers of visitors and visitor profile among other things and access to the 107 questionnaires gathered in 8 different story locations during the season of 2008 has given a minor insight into participant aspects not salient from the slides.

Though internal statistics are based on a rather limited sample of questionnaires it is believed to provide some indications on the practical conditions and furthermore, these are the numbers that are used in the internally evaluation of TL.

1.3. Tourism in the area of "Limfjorden"

The inlet *Limfjorden* is situated in the northern part of Denmark and separates the island Vendsyssel-Thy from the rest of the Jutland peninsula. It extends from Thyborøn Channel on the

North Sea to Hals on Kattegat, it's approximately 180 kilometres long, and of irregular shape with several bays, narrowings and islands, most notably Mors.

In other words, the surrounding municipalities of Limfjorden cover a rather extended area stretching into the Regions of Northern Jutland and Central Jutland respectively (Fig. 1). Within tourism the political regions each has its own DMO – *VisitNordjylland* (www.visitnordjylland.com) in the north and *Midtjysk Turisme* (www.visitcentraljutland.dk) in the central part of Jutland. Naturally a region hosts numerous local tourism destinations that often equal the division of municipalities, which is also the case within the area of Limfjorden (Fig. 2).

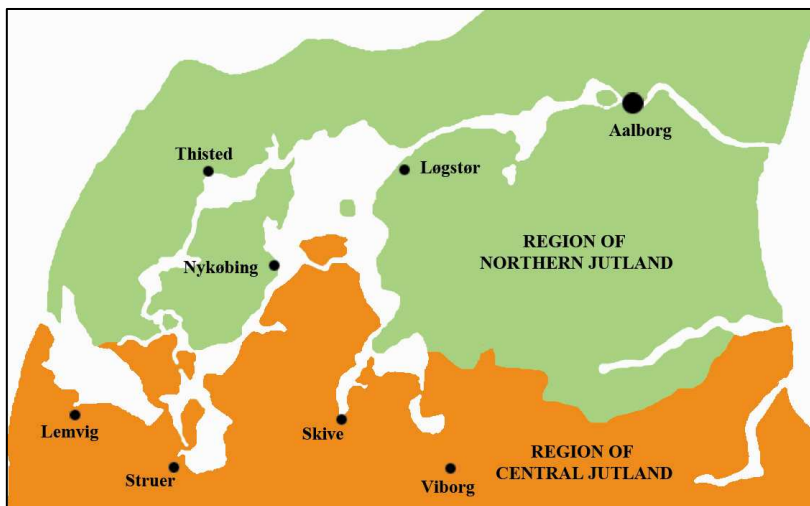


Figure 1 Limfjorden and the surrounding regions

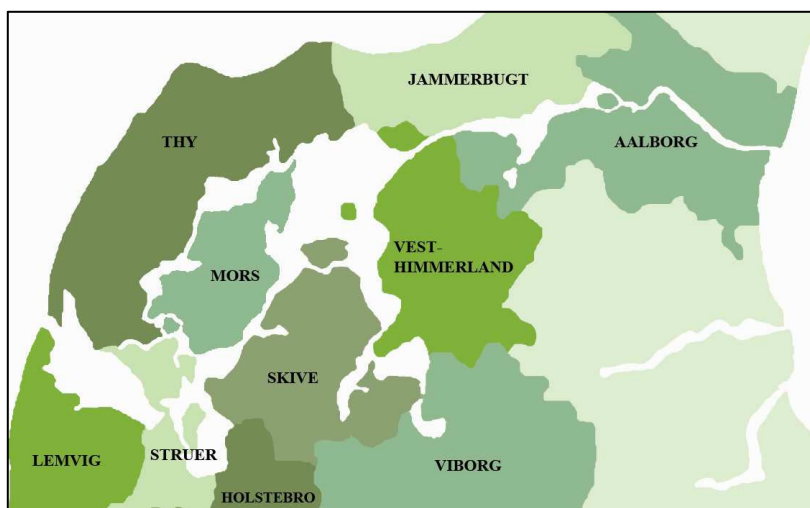


Figure 2 Local destinations in the Limfjord area

Hence, the area is obviously made up by a variety of destinations and thereof it also has a variety of tourism possibilities from city-breaks and MICE-tourism, primarily in the city of Aalborg, to more nature related tourism, notably on the extended stretches of coast within the area. However, seeing that holiday cottages and camping sites are without comparison the most dominant forms of accommodation (accounting for more than 70% of the total overnight stays),³ the natural surroundings – or more specifically the coast – appear to be the most salient motive among tourists for visiting while the cities accounts for day-trip visits far more than being the actual centre of a leisure stay.⁴

The importance of tourism around Limfjorden appears to vary from one location to another. A number of areas near the coast, notably on the North Sea, are constituted by large clusters of holiday cottages that account for a considerable

³ All numbers are based on statistical data from 2007-2008 collected through The Danish Statistical Bank (www.statistikbanken.dk)

⁴ Owing to delimitations of the statistical database in use, overnight stays are gathered from the entire political regions of Northern and Central Jutland and includes leisure as well as business travels. This seems to cause certain bias; on the one hand it might indicate that the percentage of stays in cottages and camping sites, if measured exclusively within leisure tourism, would be even more significant, but on the other hand MICE tourism or hotel stays and city-breaks are characterized by a higher expenditure pr. day and hence a more exact count of the importance of tourism would obviously have to include an economic perspective.

share of the total tourist overnight stays – even on a national level (see Danmarks Statistik, 2009) – and as a consequence hereof the nearby surroundings appear to depend on the stay of tourists and/or second home owners. In the inland areas of Limfjorden, on the contrary, tourism doesn't seem to have the same importance for the local economy, because it appears to be based more on day-trips and shorter holiday breaks.⁵

Domestic tourism makes up for about 50% of all annual overnight stays within the area, while the foreign markets are mainly represented by neighbouring countries with Germany (32,12 %) as the most dominant followed by Norway (7,15 %), Sweden (3,30 %) and the Netherlands (2,34 %). Not surprisingly, the summer months constitute the main tourist season, especially July and August, during which a larger percentage of the tourists are foreigners and, despite a significant decrease during the last years, Germans still account for approximately 60% of all holiday cottage rentals. The rather limited extension of the tourism season seems to be a natural consequence of the abovementioned nature based tourism in combination with the Danish weather conditions. Nevertheless, national efforts are now being made in order to extend the season (cf. www.visitdenmark.com), a tendency that seems to have spread and also appears in TL, where stories for the first time are provided during national holidays outside the summer season.

Looking at the primary segments within the main foreign markets, families with children is the most representative segment among German (47.1 %) and Norwegian (58 %) tourists, followed by couples 40+ travelling without children (44% and 34.1 % respectively), whereof the latter is accentuated as having a increased potential at the German market (VisitDenmark. 2009A+B). Among the domestic tourists, couples travelling without children (unfortunately age doesn't appear from the statistics available) are the leading segment (31 %) closely followed by families with children in second place (29 %) (VisitDenmark 2008). Furthermore, the coordinator of TL points to a geographical difference being that the main target group of the inland areas of Limfjorden is the "empty nesters" while families with children are top priority on the coast of the North Sea.⁶

Concerning motives, nature, safe and secure destination, friendly population and child friendly environment are dominant factors for the German and Norwegian tourists choosing Denmark as a holiday destination (VisitDenmark 2009A+B), while the Danish tourists are mostly concerned with having fun, spending time with friends and relatives, escaping daily routines and recreation, followed by nature, self-care and good accommodation (VisitDenmark 2008). During a holiday stay a dominant share of Danish tourists prefer activities such as taking a walk, visiting museums and attractions, going to the beach and eating out.

1.4. The Tales of the Limfjord – a presentation of usage and content

Each week during the main season 2009 (end of June to mid August) 34 different story arrangements are presented by a number of actors, e.g. local art and historical museums together with manor houses and convents/monasteries; private food manufacturers such as farms, a local brewery and a small dairy; and nature counsellors of local reserves and sanctuaries. As mentioned, this year TL has for the first time launched stories during national holidays outside the summer season, i.e. winter, Easter and autumn holidays, although not all 34 stories are available during these weeks.

⁵ Gitte Skoubo, p. 5

⁶ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6

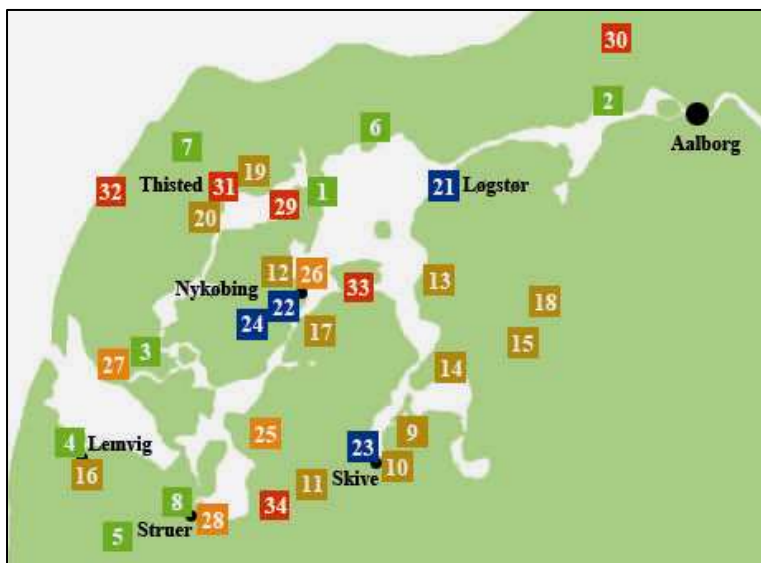


Figure 3 Map of storytelling events in “Tales of the Limfjord”.

The stories are divided into 5 themes (history, nature, craft and industry, the maritime and temptations) containing from 4-12 arrangements each. For the sake of clarity all 34 stories are placed on a regional map (Fig. 3) and short presentations, based on the TL promotional material, are presented below (Table 1).

Those interested in a story just have to turn up at the announced time and place – tickets are only sold on the spot and no lower limits of participants are requested for the story to be told, though, upper limits are set in some stories due to capacity.

As it can be seen, the TL arrangements are geographically spread around Limfjorden, though a clear concentration of stories is located in the western part of the area. The stories are based upon local characteristics from the particular area and each story arrangement is settled for a specific day and time during the week where a guide – i.e. storyteller – will take the attending tourists for a tour by foot, car or a sail of 45 minutes to 2.5 hours of duration, depending on the specific story. In other words, the stories are all told in what could be called the “traditional way” of telling a story, i.e. face-to-face interaction between the storyteller and the participants/tourists, the latter mostly taking part in the story as passive listeners.

However, some of the stories draw attention to the fact that other resources are used as supplement to the oral telling of a story. One story event (no. 21), for example, takes the tourists sailing on Limfjorden and seemingly adds a means of transportation as part of the story and furthermore this event was, without comparison, the most popular story in 2008, accounting for 20,5 % of all visitors (Netværk Limfjorden’s own statistics). However, the high number of visitors has to be seen in the light of the fact that this particular story – unlike the rest – is told not once but six times a week. The stories within the category “The Temptations of Limfjorden”, a taste of the local product, such as fish and shellfish, beer, ice cream etc., enters as an element of the event – products that in most cases are offered for sale in own shops – and representatives of this category (no. 31, 34 and 30 respectively) were in fact “tempting” in more than one sense as they also represented some of last year’s top stories (ibid.).

Yet in other stories the storyteller dresses up as one of the main characters in the tale (cf. no. 11) and another story event intends to activate the tourists by offering them the opportunity to learn how to use old fashion fishing tackles (no. 17).

By this a short introduction to product content has been made which is mainly based on the promotional material of TL – a more thoroughly examination will be presented later (chapter 4).

STORY ARRANGEMENTS AND THEMES 2009				
NATURE	1) The moler⁷ of Mors The prehistorical secrets hidden in the depositing of the moler. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Moler Museum.	2) The Fishermen – from fiction to reality in Gjøl The story takes its points of departure in a novel by Hans Kirk about the local religious fishermen. Duration: 2 hour. Actor: The Nature Centre of Han Herred. Limitations: Own car needed.	3) People and Limfjorden through time Telling about Limfjorden and the people living there through time. Duration: 1 hour 30 min. Actor: The Limfjord Centre, Doverodder.	4) Sheep and shepherds – nature nursing at Gjeller Odde. Takes the participant on a trip to tidal meadow and tells about the sheep and nature caretaking. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: Lystbæk Farm – An ecological farm and restaurant.
	5) Klosterheden – The Beavers has arrived! The beaver died out in Denmark 1000 years ago – now it's back and the tourist is taken to "beaver land". Duration: 1 hour 30 min. Actor: The Danish Administration of Forest and Nature.	6) The ford⁸ of Han Herred – Land reclamation and bird life The guide tells stories about the former reclamation plans together with the bird life that can be experienced. Duration: 1-2 hours. Actor: The Nature Centre of Vejlerne. Limitations: Own means of transportation needed.	7) The National Park of Thy During a 3 kilometres walk through the wilderness, stories about the origin of the landscape and former living conditions are told. Duration: 1-1.5 hours. Actor: The Danish Administration of Forest and Nature. Limitations: Unqualified if trouble walking.	8) The Japanese garden in Struer Offers a sense experience of timelessness and inner peace. The visit includes a drink, coffee and cake. Duration: 1 hour 30 min. Actor: The Japanese Garden. Limitations: max. 35 pers.
	9) The Manor of Staarup: A walk through 650 years A walk through the old manor house and its many halls and rooms ¹ . Antiques sold from own shop. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Manor of Staarup	10) The Convent of Ørslev Tellings about the life in the convent and the changes it has experienced the last 800 years. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Convent of Ørslev	11) Hjerl Hede - The nature and "rakkere"⁹ A walk through the museum village and the surrounding nature/moors where stories are told about the ostracized "rakkere". Duration: 2.5 hours. Actor: The Open-air Museum of Hjerl Hede.	12) Stories from Dueholm A walk through the old city quarters around the former Monastery of Dueholm in Nykøbing that offer a wealth of good stories. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Historical Museums of Morsland
	HISTORY			

⁷ "Moler": A kind of diatomaceous earth found in Denmark and used elsewhere as a building material for its lightness and heat resistance (Oxford English Dictionary)

⁸ "Ford": A tract of shallow water (Oxford English Dictionary)

⁹ "Rakkere" – also known as the "night people" – were a group of people that were considered as outlaws by the villagers and during night took care of all the dirty work for the prize of something to eat and drink; e.g. removing garbage and dead animals from the villages. An executioner's assistant is also known under the name a "rakker".

MARITIME	<p>13) Ertebølle – a trip to a kitchen midden</p> <p>The story takes the tourists back to the stone age telling about the last hunter- and collector society in Denmark and their living conditions.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Stone Age Centre of Ertebølle</p>	<p>14) The Manor of Hessel – A journey back to the land of agriculture</p> <p>The manor house of Hessel is a living museum that presents the way of life in the country 100 years ago.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Manor of Hessel.</p>	<p>15) The Monastery of Testrup – A place of pilgrimage</p> <p>Stories about the history of the monastery of Testrup, its church and hospital in the Middle Ages.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Monastery of Testrup</p>	<p>16) The Museum of Religious Art</p> <p>The tale of how the museum was founded in 1994 and how the help of the locals made it a success.</p> <p>Duration: 45 min.</p> <p>Actor: The Museum of Religious Art</p>
	<p>17) The Museum of Sallingsund – A real tale from Limfjorden</p> <p>The story of a local fishermen society and a successful industry. Participants are taught how to make a dragnet and catch shrimps.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Museum of Sallingsund and environs.</p>	<p>18) Vesthimmerland – From past till present</p> <p>Tales about the poverty and farmer life in the 19th century, the prosperity caused by the railway, and the artist Per Kirkeby.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Museum of Vesthimmerland</p>	<p>19) The passage grave of Lundehej</p> <p>Pre-historical stories told with point of departure in a burial mound and the idea of death at that time.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Museum of Thisted</p>	<p>20) The old provincial town of Thisted</p> <p>A city walk with stories about the town history and the famous poet and city son, J. P. Jacobsen.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Museum of Thisted</p>
	<p>21) The Museum of Limfjorden - A sail through The Channel of Frederic VII</p> <p>A guided tour through the channel that opened in 1861 and made it possible to carry heavy goods by ship to Løgstør.</p> <p>Duration: 2 hours.</p> <p>Actor: The Museum of Limfjorden</p> <p>Limitations: max 30 persons – reservation recommended.</p>	<p>22) The city heart</p> <p>The harbour of the island Mors is the heart of the city of Nykøbing and a walk reveals stories full of life.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Historical Museum of Morsland.</p>	<p>23) The harbour of Skive – then and now</p> <p>An insight into the history of the harbour and its importance to the city. The new and modern facilities will also be paid a visit.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour 30 min.</p> <p>Actor: The Maritime Centre of Skive.</p>	<p>24) At command of the king</p> <p>A walk through the city of Nykøbing with good stories about both the ancient times and the more recent past.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour.</p> <p>Actor: The Historical Museum of Morsland.</p>

CRAFT & INDUSTRY	25) Museum of Wood in Oddense – a museum of woodwork Exhibitions and workshops with tools dated back to 19 th century and a number of wooden sculptures are on view. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Museum of Wood	26) The fairytale of an industry The story of the successful foundry Morsø Jernstøberi and the life in the town of Nykøbing in the beginning of the 20 th century Duration: 1 hours. Actor: The Danish Museum of Foundry	27) The energy of nature - The Nordic Centre of Renewable Energy Sources A walk through a green village that lives 100% by renewable energy sources, low-energy technology and houses. Duration: 2 hours. Actor: The Nordic Centre of Renewable Energy Sources.	28) Struer – the railway city of Denmark A visit to the railway collection containing steam- and diesel-powered engines and old coaches. Duration: 2 hours. Actor: The Museum of Struer.
	29) Flora and fauna at The Farm of Skarregaard The stories are centred in the ecological agriculture of animals and gardens at Skarregaard that delivers the ingredients to the productions of its own delicacies. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Farm of Skarregaard	30) Cheese, ice cream and butter – grand traditions at the Dairy of Aabybro A visit to one of the oldest dairies in Denmark, the Dairy of Aabybro. A short tour followed by a lecture on dairy production... and a taste of its ice cream. Duration: 1 hour 15 min. Actor: The Dairy of Aabybro	31) The Brewery of Thisted A visit to one of the locally-owned breweries in Denmark and with a production of several ecological beers. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Brewery of Thisted. Limitations: max 25 pers.	32) Vorupør - dry fish and snaps The story of life in the fishing village with focus on the many ways of cooking a fish and the possibility to taste dry fish and get the recipe of good snaps. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Museum of Vorupør
	33) The Farm Shop of FurØ The stories of ecological and nature nursing and animal holds that is the source of production of meat and wool, demonstrated and sold in the farm shop. Duration: 45 min. Actor: The Farm Shop of FurØ	34) Taste the Land of Limfjorden Local delicacies such as fish and shellfish, a duck-specialty and Danish wine are served and garnished with historical tales. Duration: 1 hour. Actor: The Manor house of Landting.		
	TEMPERATURES			

Table 1 Storytelling events in “Tales of the Limfjord” (Based on: Netværk Limfjorden 2009 [own translation, JRKL])

1.5. Initiative and implementation

In the late 1990's the Network of Limfjorden (the association behind TL, cf. 2.1) decided to let the regional DMO, *Midt-Nord Turisme*, which at that time covered the counties of Northern Jutland and

Viborg, handle all practical coordination and administration of the network. The DMO and the tourism director, Jørgen Hansen, hereby became central in relation to the development of new tourism projects around Limfjorden.

With the prospect of developing new tourism products, so-called vision and inspiration meetings were held within the network. Several stakeholders¹⁰ especially refer to one particular meeting at a local inn, Hvalpsund Fægekro, where all members of the Network of Limfjorden were invited, i.e. approximately 100 persons including politicians from the municipalities and counties together with public and private companies.¹¹ The fact that meetings were not held between directors of tourism but included employees at all levels of the tourism sector is described by one stakeholder as a promoting factor for more ideas¹² and the purpose of this particular meeting was to come up with new potential product development projects. One of the principal ideas that came up during the meeting was to improve the communication of the cultural history by using stories:

“I remember we used the expression: there is a “gold mine of stories” to be told about Limfjorden and the areas around it – so why don’t we do that?” (Jørgen Hansen, p. 11 [Own translation, JRKL]).

So during this meeting the preliminary steps towards the use of storytelling and the development of TL were established. One of the main tasks in developing this new product would be to structure it in order to make the stories accessible to tourists, and it resulted in a system where stories were categorized in themes where the same story was told at the same time each week during the season.¹³ Furthermore, stories within the same theme shouldn’t be told at the same time so that during a week it would be possible to pursue a certain theme throughout the area of Limfjorden¹⁴ – an intention that may have been complicated to fulfil as overlaps do appear in the present product offer.

1.6. The first stories

Midt-Nord Turisme was given the position as product coordinator and secretary, a post they maintained the first three years of TL (2005-2007), and when the product was implemented in 2005 it consisted of nothing less than 57 stories divided in 8 themes: Nature, The Maritime, Churches, Monasteries, Writers and poets, History, Food, and The Route of Snaps (Netværk Limfjorden, 2005).

Unlike today the stories covered all the area of Limfjorden – from Hals in the eastern end to Thyborøn in the west, from Aabybro in the north to Thorning (Viborg) in the south (Ibid.). Furthermore, tickets were not only sold as single tickets on the spot but could be pursued beforehand at the local tourist offices and at accommodations and “coupons” providing access to 5 different stories of free choice during the whole season were also sold at that time (Ibid.).

The accommodation facilities were offered the opportunity to buy tickets at a special prize with the intention of having them offer tourist packages including overnight stays at the inn, hotel or

¹⁰ Jørgen Hansen, p. 1; Susanne Overgaard, p. 2; Gitte Skoubo, p. 1

¹¹ Jørgen Hansen, p. 1

¹² Susanne Overgaard, p. 1

¹³ Jørgen Hansen, p. 1-2

¹⁴ Jørgen Hansen, p. 2

camping site and a “story-coupon” that provided access to one or more of the stories.¹⁵ For some reason, only very few accommodation companies showed interest in providing such product and the idea was eventually given up.¹⁶

Furthermore, due to the economic setup of TL where the actors providing the stories were – and still are – supposed to get the whole amount from ticket sales, it was difficult to administer a complex system of selling tickets and coupons¹⁷ – and today tickets are only sold directly at the story-spot.

Several matters related to TL have however changed since the first stories were launched in 2005. In the following (chapter 2), the organizational context and development concerning TL will be presented, followed by an investigation of TL’s impact on destination development (chapter 3) and finally a thorough examination and discussion of stakeholders and actors understanding and application of storytelling as of today.

2. Organization and network

2.1. The Network of Limfjorden

As mentioned above, TL is stretching across a number of established destinations anchored in the various local geographical areas. However, the product is managed within *Netværk Limfjorden*; a collaborative network established in 1995 with the purpose to develop tourism within the Limfjord region and make people move around the area.¹⁸

On the public tourism level the Network of Limfjorden includes the two political regions and the majority of surrounding municipalities (except Aalborg and Viborg) counting 16 local tourist offices along the coast of Limfjorden. These stakeholders are members of either the DMO *VisitNordjylland* in the Northern region or *Midtjysk Turisme* in the central region of Jutland, and furthermore some take part in other destination co-operations, e.g. *Turistgruppen Vestjylland* (www.visitvestjylland.com), stretching beyond the Limfjord network.

The network is organizationally established as an association and is managed by a committee holding 12 members that count political representatives and tourism stakeholders. The political members are chosen externally by public stakeholders and represent 2 politicians from the regional offices and 2 politicians from a municipality in each of the two regions. The rest of the members are elected by the members at the annual general meeting and consist of directors of local tourism agencies and actors from the tourism industry in general.¹⁹ Besides that, representatives from the DMOs attend the committee meetings, mostly as observers with the function of what might be classified an external sparring partner.²⁰ The committee furthermore holds an executive committee that work out the network’s planning and working programmes and launch new projects after approval from the other members of the committee.¹

¹⁵ Jørgen Hansen, p. 9

¹⁶ Jørgen Hansen, p. 9

¹⁷ Gitte Skoubo, p. 1

¹⁸ Jørgen Hansen, p. 1

¹⁹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2 – oversigt over bestyrelsesmedlemmer haves også

²⁰ Susanne Overgaard, p. 2, VisitNordjylland, p. 3+5; Gitte Skoubo, p. 3

The fundamental idea of the network is to launch new tourism projects – i.e. initiate and develop tourist products which in the long run will be able to manage on their own.²¹ An example of this is seen in *Snapseruten* – “The Route of Snaps” – (www.snapseruten.dk), developed within the network of Limfjorden but now established as an independent product.²² Despite the fact, that TL has entered its fifth season with stories it is still considered to be a developing product and therefore it is still managed within the network and is not yet on the point of being set free.²³ The TL stories are a very central part of the activities within the association and at the moment maybe even the pillar of the network itself – a tendency that seems to have been increased due to a recent refusal on an application for an INTERREG project²⁴ which put a stop to what might have added another tourist product to the network; thus, at this point TL continues to be the only tourist product managed within the framework of the network association. Besides developing tourist products the Network of Limfjorden promotes tourist attractions around Limfjorden and participates in relevant national tourism campaigns – e.g. the promotion of sailing vacations in Denmark (www.visitlimfjorden.com).

2.2. Stakeholders of the network

Basically, the network welcomes any stakeholder with interest in promoting and developing tourism at Lim-fjorden and therefore the members also count all kinds of actors from public stakeholders to small private companies.

Not surprisingly, tourism actors are to a large extent the main target for the network cooperation being that it works for the sake of their businesses.²⁵ However, developing new products often mean long-winded perspective which is described as an impediment to get tourism actors involved as they often seem to worry about more short-term conditions, i.e. how do we sell the product we already have.²⁶ Especially the attention of accommodation facilities such as camping sites and distributors of holiday cottages haven't been reached by the current projects of the network²⁷ which could be due to a focus aimed at developing activity based experiences rather than accommodation related products.²⁸

Museums, on the other hand, play a central part in the network both generally speaking but in particular TL is believed to have improved the collaboration between the tourism sector and the museums being that the product is directed towards communication of the authentic culture and history (cf. 4.3.)²⁹ and the head of The Historical Museum of Morsland believes that the museums of Mors have gained a lot from the collaborations with tourism actors.³⁰

The economic perspective cannot be neglected and therefore especially the two regions and the municipalities around Limfjorden are of course important partners to involve in the network due to

²¹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 1

²² Susanne Overgaard, p. 1; Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

²³ Susanne Overgaard, p. 1

²⁴ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4, Dina Overgaard, p. 2, Jørgen Hansen, p. 4+6, VisitNordjylland, p. 6

²⁵ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

²⁶ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2-3

²⁷ Gitte Skoubo, p. 3; Jørgen Hansen, p. 10

²⁸ Gitte Skoubo, p. 3

²⁹ Jørgen Hansen, p. 5-6

³⁰ Susanne Overgaard, p. 4

their ability to provide considerable support (cf. 2.6)³¹ and the fact that the two major municipalities – Aalborg and Viborg – have chosen not to be part of the network clearly causes some annoyance.³² However, this is not only because of the loss of the economic contribution but the lack of these municipalities also results in an incomplete geographical coverage which is evident in the unequal spreading of stories around Limfjorden (cf. Fig. 3).³³

2.3. Political reform and structural changes

Due to a new political reform that changed the tourism landscapes and consequently also the position of the network, the management and coordination within the network and TL in particular have experienced considerable changes.³⁴

As mentioned, *Midt-Nord Turisme* was the dominant DMO in the area of Limfjorden at the time TL was initiated and implemented. The DMO covered the counties of Northern Jutland and Viborg and thereby a large percentages of Limfjorden stretching both south and north of the fiord. In other words, it seemed highly reasonable that the regional DMO at that time got involved in the development of Limfjorden as a tourism destination³⁵ and, as we have seen (cf. 1.4.), the DMO became an important initiator of the TL product and was involved as product coordinator and secretariat from 2005-2007.

However, a new political reform, put into effect the 1th of January 2007, didn't just mean that the former three counties around Limfjorden were transformed into only two regions – The Region of Northern Jutland and The Region of Central Jutland (cf. Fig. 2), but what turned out to be even more important for the tourism cooperation around Limfjorden, the regions were suddenly obligated to deal with tourism development and for that reason new DMOs based on the regional borders were established.³⁶

In the beginning, *VisitNordjylland* (formerly *Midt-Nord Turisme*), was still the manager and coordinator of TL. However, the regional DMO was now financed by the Region of Northern Jutland and therefore primarily had to focus on tourism development within the northern part of Jutland, i.e. the regional DMO covered a smaller geographical area of Limfjorden than before and consequently the involvement in the network and TL no longer seemed as obvious as it used to be.³⁷ *VisitNordjylland* informed the committee of *Netværk Limfjorden* that by the end of the season 2007 they couldn't – at least not at the same prize³⁸ – handle the job as coordinator and secretary.³⁹ The local Tourist Agency in Struer volunteered for the job as coordinator⁴⁰ while the Region of Central Jutland agreed to handle all the administrative tasks⁴¹ and since then *VisitNordjylland* hasn't played an active part in the network.

³¹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 4; Jørgen Hansen, p. 11; Gitte Skoubo, p. 3

³² Gitte Skoubo, p. 3

³³ Jørgen Hansen, p. 5

³⁴ Dina Overgaard, p. 2; Susanne Overgaard, p. 3; VisitNordjylland, p. 3; Jørgen Hansen, p. 6.

³⁵ Jørgen Hansen, p. 2

³⁶ Jørgen Hansen, p. 4

³⁷ Visitnordjylland, p.3; Susanne Overgaard, p. 3; Gitte Skoubo, p. 2, Jørgen Hansen, p. 6

³⁸ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2; Susanne Overgaard, p. 3.

³⁹ VisitNordjylland, p. 3; VisitNordjylland, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

⁴¹ Jørgen Hansen, p. 4

2.4. Product coordination and administration

The new political agenda means that Limfjorden no longer match up geographically with any of the formalized tourism constellation but instead, roughly speaking, constitutes the borderline between the two new regional DMOs.⁴² Seeing that the network around TL is organized as an association, it doesn't hold any permanent staffs, which means that whenever possible specific tasks and/or field of responsibility are now divided between members or stakeholders within the network; otherwise are services in relation to certain assignments bought externally.⁴³

A product coordinator or manager is chosen for each of the network's development projects.⁴⁴ The management of TL is for the second year held by the local tourist agency in Struer (www.visitstruer.dk) which is responsible for coordinating any common activity concerning the TL product – e.g. planning of the season, agreement on the contribution of stories and publication of the promotional pamphlet.⁴⁵ The agency has 3 employees, including the director of tourism Gitte Skoubo, and besides the role within the network of Limfjorden, the agency are in charge of promoting tourism in Struer and the peninsula of Thyholm. Furthermore, Gitte Skoubo has been the vice-president of the network committee during the last 5-6 years.⁴⁶

As mentioned, the secretariat and all administrative tasks concerning both the network in general and the TL product – keeping accounts, fundraising and calling meetings – is put in the hands of an administrative employee within the Region of Central Jutland.⁴⁷ The employee was, however, a member of the executive committee of *Netværk Limfjorden* when the preliminary initiatives to TL was taken⁴⁸ and it seems that the Region of Central Jutland has been able to utilize an internal expertise and knowledge within their organisation in order to contribute to the tourism network.

While the structure is accentuated by some stakeholders as one of the primary weaknesses of the network cooperative,⁴⁹ one stakeholder describes it as an advantage due to its flexibility⁵⁰ – e.g. stakeholders at all levels can work on projects they have a special interest in – which is considered a necessity seeing that the purpose of the network is to develop and not to run tourist products, though the same stakeholder acknowledged that the efficiency of the network hereby depends on personal interest and engagement.⁵¹

The network structure means that the coordinator and the secretary of TL have to handle product coordination and administration as a part time job besides fulfilling their main job as director of tourism and regional official respectively. The coordinator also expresses her concerns being that the continuously increasing demands on tourist agencies in regard of performance side by side with economic cutbacks makes it difficult to establish sufficient resources to carry out network related tasks.⁵² Although it is stressed by TL stakeholders that the coordinator is doing a great job and has

⁴² Jørgen Hansen, p. 10;

⁴³ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2; Susanne Overgaard, p. 3

⁴⁴ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

⁴⁵ Jørgen Hansen, p. 10

⁴⁶ Gitte Skoubo, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Jørgen Hansen, p. 4; Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

⁴⁸ Susanne Overgaard, p. 1; Jørgen Hansen, p. 4

⁴⁹ Jørgen Hansen, p. 4 Dina Overgaard, p. 1-2

⁵⁰ Susanne Overgaard, p. 3

⁵¹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 3

⁵² Gitte Skoubo, p. 8

overcome most initial difficulties in taking over for VisitNordjylland,⁵³ several stakeholders – including the coordinator – express a wish for a more formalized organization structure with the integration of a small, independent secretariat within the network that at best could employ a person to deal exclusively with the coordination and management of the network and its products.⁵⁴

2.5. Actors – the organizations behind the stories

Besides the stakeholders on destination level, TL naturally consists of a number of actors providing the actual product – the telling of tales. As mentioned, this group contains actors from different types of tourist attractions (historical museums, nature parks etc.) as well as other business sectors (e.g. dairy, brewery, farms); thus, great diversity seems to characterize the group of storytelling organizations. While some of the actors represent organizations that count several employees meaning that the director and the actual storyteller are two different persons and even the storyteller might change from one event to the next, others are small or micro sized companies where the storyteller and company owner are one and the same person and besides that some of the storytelling actors make up a mixture of public and private organizations. It could have been interesting to pursue organisational matters in terms of whether differences exist among the actors' valuation of the network and the story product according to company size (big/small) and ownership (private/public) but unfortunately no salient evidence exists in the gathered data.

The network puts up the practical demands that have to be fulfilled in order for an actor to be involved as storyteller – e.g. they have to provide a story each week throughout the season and carry it through even though only one participant has turned up⁵⁵ – which are sent to each actor as a part of the information portfolio. Being a member of the association *Netværk Limfjorden* involves a payment of an annual subscription (cf. 2.6) and membership is not required in order to become a storytelling actor because the extra expense could exclude small private companies, churches and others that in fact are relevant story providers of TL.⁵⁶

The tourist agencies are in charge of selecting the storytellers from their particular destination area causing that the type of participating storytellers often changes from one season to the next as the tourist agencies are free to choose the storytellers they consider great ambassadors.⁵⁷ In other words, it is up to the local tourist agencies to guarantee the quality of the content and performance of the participating stories.⁵⁸ From the point of view of the coordinator, the effort put in selecting the stories varies from one destination to another: while some make much of finding new stories, others seems to be satisfied to have found 7 storytellers that want to contribute and therefore stick with the same stories through several years⁵⁹ and comparing the stories presented in the first promotion pamphlet (2005) with this year's storytelling actors (2009) it appears that no less than 12 story locations have been involved since the beginning.⁶⁰ The coordinator of TL, however

⁵³ Dina Overgaard, p. 2; Susanne Overgaard, p. 3

⁵⁴ Gitte Skoubo, p. 8; Dina Overgaard, p. 2; Jørgen Hansen, p. 10

⁵⁵ Gitte Skoubo, p. 1-2; Information portfolio

⁵⁶ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

⁵⁷ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4

⁵⁸ Gitte Skoubo, p. 5

⁵⁹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4

⁶⁰ Netværk Limfjorden 2005 + 2009

encourage all tourist agencies to have an eye to the numbers of participants so that stories attracting only few guests per season are abolished.⁶¹

According to the interviewed stakeholders that are responsible for selecting stories, visitor numbers are in fact an important criterion of success and are used to decide whether a story should continue or be replaced,⁶² and likewise the quality and the story idea appear as the leading reasons for choosing a particular story in the first place – i.e. would it be able to attract tourists and does it represent something unique and extraordinary from our area.⁶³ Seen in the light of the actual number of visitors which in 2008 in average counted 12.1 visitors per story, the criteria for success appear relatively modest but still elimination seems possible with point of departure in visitor numbers as the 3 stories with the lowest number only received a total of 0-10 visitors during the whole season and therefore obviously are not as successful as the 3 leading stories representing a total of 348-822 visitors each.⁶⁴ One of the stakeholders stresses that it is difficult to foresee what will turn out as a success but the experience from previous seasons have given a better understanding of what attracts people.⁶⁵ Another tells that opportunities are sought with point of departure in the settled themes in order to have stories representing different aspects.⁶⁶

However, it is not only a matter of discovering and selecting suitable stories among offers that already exist in another context but new stories are also created from scratch or existing stories are adjusted according to the TL concept and its categorizations.⁶⁷

2.6. Financing

As mentioned, the network is structured as an association and consequently all members pay a subscription which is differentiated based on how many tourists the locations or actors potentially receive.⁶⁸ Hence, the municipalities pay according to the number of inhabitants while hotels, inns and camping sites pay according to capacity or size and museums together with small private companies pay a determined amount.⁶⁹ Besides that the two regions contribute to the network and furthermore the Region of Central Jutland is engaged in applications for EU funding when relevant opportunities turn up.⁷⁰ Money from the subscriptions is used within network activities in general and is not exclusively directed towards TL.

With regard to TL, each of the local tourist agencies pay a fee for the participants involved from their particular destination area – in 2009 the costs were settled at DKR 25,000 for the registering of seven story events.⁷¹ On this matter, some agencies join forces across municipal borders: Lemvig, Struer and Holstebro/Vinderup contribute as one destination area with 7 stories and the same is seen at Jammerbugt and Vesthimmerland. Money from story fees is of course earmarked the running of TL and covers the production of a promotional pamphlet, tickets and other print materials while the

⁶¹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4

⁶² Dina Overgaard, p. 4 Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 4, Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

⁶³ Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 4; Dina Overgaard, p. 4

⁶⁴ The networks own statistics.

⁶⁵ Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

⁶⁶ Dina Overgaard, p. 4

⁶⁷ Dina Overgaard, p. 4, Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 4, Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

⁶⁸ Gitte Skoubo, p. 3, Jørgen Hansen, p. 11

⁶⁹ Jørgen Hansen, p. 11, Gitte Skoubo, p. 3

⁷⁰ Jørgen Hansen, p. 11

⁷¹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4

fee paid to the Tourist Agency in Struer for handling the coordination of TL is paid by the network association.⁷²

A point worth emphasizing is that the storytellers do not have to pay to enter TL and not even all storytellers are members of the network association.⁷³ Thus, it could seem a favourable deal to provide stories for TL, as the storytelling actors obtain increased marketing exposure through the TL pamphlets and joint website while they get to keep all income from entrance fees of the story arrangements (DKR 50 per adult)⁷⁴ but in fact it doesn't appear to be a motivator, apparently because involvement is still associated with uncertainty. While the network in the initiating phase of TL provided a security consisting in a payment to level out with a possible loss due to failing visitor numbers,⁷⁵ no guarantees for earnings or economic status quo are any longer made as earnings now exclusively depend on the number of participants turning up for each event; so whereas some actors might profit from telling stories, others risk to barely meet the cost of the storyteller.⁷⁶ One actor believes this could be one of the reasons why there is a relatively low interest in becoming involved as a storytelling actor.⁷⁷

2.7. Internal communication

The former director of the regional DMO *Midt-Nord Turisme* and one of the initiators of TL, Jørgen Hansen, has recently been hired on a freelance basis to maintain the communication of the network such as newsletters, press releases and the development of a new website.⁷⁸ This means that more work is now being done on making network activities more visible to the stakeholders and actors, which according to the product coordinator strengthens the feeling of a network⁷⁹ and another member of committee likewise considers the internal communication among stakeholders and actors as well-functioning.⁸⁰

The communication mainly takes place via email where a certain formalized information flow exists in form of circulating newsletters and information about press releases.⁸¹ Some of the primary recipients of information – the tourist agencies – also consider this part of the communication as good, although one stakeholder thinks the newsletter embraces too much and would like them to focus more specifically on matters related to network of Limfjorden.⁸²

Before a new season is launched the product coordinator sends out an information portfolio to all storytellers that contains the product terms and guidelines – e.g. “The 10 commandments of a tourist guide”, a list of other storytelling actors including contact information, tickets, and questionnaires that should be handed out to the participants at each story arrangement. After having told the last story of the season, the actors have to return information about the total numbers of tickets sold together with the completed questionnaires. However, the total of returned

⁷² Gitte Skoubo, p. 5

⁷³ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2, Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

⁷⁴ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

⁷⁵ VisitNordjylland, p. 2

⁷⁶ Gitte Skoubo, p. 5, Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

⁷⁷ Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

⁷⁸ Gitte Skoubo, p. 2

⁷⁹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4

⁸⁰ Susanne Overgaard, p. 3

⁸¹ Dina Overgaard, p. 2; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 2

⁸² Dina Overgaard, p. 2

questionnaires (107 out of 3,531 adult visitors in 2008) indicates that only a few storytellers distribute these – an assumption that was confirmed during the participant observations where questionnaires only were handed out in 2 out of 6 occasions. A letter enclosed with the materials sent to all storytelling actors at the beginning of the present season verify this impression as the actors explicitly are asked to have the participant fill in the questionnaires.

The impression of the internal communication indicates that it mainly has the function of a one-way street (top-down) which first of all seems to be confirmed by the modest return of information (questionnaires) from the storytellers. Furthermore, taking contact to one of the storytelling actors during the research process seemed to confirm this lack of knowledge flow as the person who the product coordinator was informed should be the TL responsible was actually no longer an employee at the particular place. In other words, the contact information received by the product coordinator didn't match up with reality because she hadn't been informed of the changes leaving the impression that some storytelling actors apparently don't consider their story as dependent of the overall TL coordination neither do they see it as an integrated part of the TL product.

2.8. Meetings

Within the committee of *Netværk Limfjorden* meetings are held on a regular basis: Every second month or at least quarterly a meeting between members of the committee are convened and the executive committee meets even more frequently, once a month at minimum.⁸³ Besides that 2-3 times a year all members of the association is called to a meeting, including the obligatory general meeting of the association in which, among other things, the annual accounts are presented and new members for the committee are elected.

Meetings that are related directly to TL and involve other stakeholders and actors than committee members are only held once a year after the end of the season to evaluate activities and to discuss potential improvements for the upcoming season.⁸⁴ Earlier, "kick off" meetings were held at the beginning of a new season but because of scanty attendance from storytelling actors it was judged redundant by the product coordinator.⁸⁵ However, the first season in charge, the coordinator took the opportunity to visit all actors and ensure that she had met all of them in person.⁸⁶

According to the product manager and a member of committee,⁸⁷ low attendance from the storytelling actors is still experienced and TL meetings are mainly attended by stakeholders from management level of the network – i.e. local directors of tourism and members of the committee. Although a higher degree of engagement and attendance would be appreciated, many actors already experience that they have to invest a lot of resources in telling the stories throughout the season and based on that two of the main stakeholders think it is understandable that many don't have the sufficient time and energy to attend the meetings – which in addition often requires some transport – and thus many actors leave all practical issues to the local tourist agencies.⁸⁸ However, it was stressed that actors, who are members of the network association, frequently *do* turn up at the meetings and that they in fact often represent minor companies, where owner and storyteller is the

⁸³ Susanne Overgaard, p. 2; mail coorespondance with Gitte Skoubo (27.08.09)

⁸⁴ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4; Susanne Overgaard, p. 2

⁸⁵ Gitte Skoubo, p. 5

⁸⁶ Gitte Skoubo, p. 5

⁸⁷ Gitte Skoubo, p. 5 + Meeting 18.05.09; Susanne Overgaard, p. 3

⁸⁸ Gitte Skobo, p. 5; Susanne Overgaard, p. 3

same person, while the largest storytelling organizations on the contrary rarely are represented at the meetings.⁸⁹ On the one hand this is seemingly an indication of a lack of engagement or feeling of ownership towards the overall product among some of the storytelling actors but on the other hand the management level of the network presumably doesn't have great confidence in the meetings as they apparently also consider the actors participation as a resource demanding and time consuming burden rather than an opportunity to have a say on important matters in relation to profitable product development. Thus, it could be assumed, that in order for actors to be more engaged, managers and coordinators within the network would have inspired them with a stronger faith in the potential of the product and the necessity of collaboration.

Furthermore, interviews undertaken with two local tourist agencies revealed that variable views on the importance of TL meetings exist at stakeholder level as well. One stakeholder accentuates that the number of meetings are too few and that it would be relevant to meet on a more regular basis in order to enhance the feeling of a network and obtain closer relationships that could generate new co-operative constellation among different tourism actors,⁹⁰ whilst on the contrary the confusion of another tourist agent regarding how often meetings are held within the network of Limfjorden and TL and who actually is responsible for representing the local agency at these meetings seemingly shows a minor engagement.⁹¹

2.9. Personal relationships and engagement

As mentioned, the first year Gitte Skoubo and the tourist agency in Struer was coordinator, she visited all the storytelling actors involved which gave her the opportunity to become acquainted with the organization and to meet most of the storytellers.⁹² However, she doesn't believe that stakeholders and actors in general have much knowledge about each other and believes that only the ones attending the meetings on a regular basis might have established some kind of relationship.⁹³ This is confirmed by the interviewed stakeholders at the local tourist agencies; One of them stresses that within the network she only knows the coordinator, the administrative secretary and the communication secretary and furthermore exemplifies the lack of knowledge with the fact that she wouldn't even be able to mention all members of the committee which is believed to be a result of the few meetings.⁹⁴ Yet another tells that she doesn't know the coordinator, and most remarkably the lack of knowledge and relationship is explained as a result of "*no natural point of contact with each other*"⁹⁵ which certainly seems to indicate that the tourist agency does not actually consider itself as an integrated partner of the network and TL cooperation as it supposedly would have been considered *the* natural point of contact.

Another evidence of a modest relationship seems to show in the lack of knowledge about the content of each other's stories. During the research, talking with several storytellers gave the impression that they would like to visit other TL stories because they in fact don't know much about them and one storytelling actor, which is also the storyteller at this particular place, expresses a need for reintroducing the "kick off" meetings in order to let storytellers exchange information

⁸⁹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Dina Overgaard, p. 2

⁹¹ Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 3

⁹² Gitte Skoubo, p. 5

⁹³ Gitte Skoubo, p. 5

⁹⁴ Dina Overgaard, p. 2

⁹⁵ Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 3 ["også fordi vi ikke har en naturlig... hvad skal vi sige... berøringsflade med hinanden"]

about the content of their particular stories.⁹⁶ Also the coordinator admits that she is not completely familiar with the content and way of telling in all of the stories⁹⁷ and in fact, the communication and press secretary, Jørgen Hansen, connected to the network on a freelance basis seems to be the only one with a general view of the stories due to his work on writing press releases and presentations.

However, the only motivator for active involvement seems to come down to the interest of the individual – i.e. his/her enthusiasm for the cooperative aspects of the product, which a large share of storytellers apparently doesn't consider important for the telling and/or selling of their particular story. In other words, much seems to indicate a low sense of ownership for the overall TL product which does not only cause that personal relationships mainly exist at management/committee level, being that they are the only ones who meet face-to-face, but also indicates that decisions primarily are made at stakeholder level, causing a one-way communication flow (top-down) where several actors and storytellers are mere recipients of definite information delivered through mails, newsletters and information portfolios. So what should be the strength of the network – its flexibility – seemingly leaves room for improvements.

3. Destination development

3.1. Niche product

Several stakeholders classify TL as a niche oriented product that is a great supplement to the vacation of the tourists already coming but which does not in itself attract additional tourists to the area.⁹⁸ One-day tourist might be attracted by TL but in general people come to Limfjorden for other reasons – e.g. the nature – and TL is mainly a supplementary offer while they are there.⁹⁹

Considerations are however made in relation to making it an attraction in itself. One of the accentuated possibilities is to develop it into a more complete package combined with other tourist products such as overnight stays or to direct it more towards groups and party tours (cf. 4.5.).¹⁰⁰

While some accentuate that more marketing (cf. 3.3.4.) is a necessity if tourists are to discover the TL stories before arriving to the area,¹⁰¹ others believe that the stories in itself might have a promoting effect on tourism due to a word-of-mouth effect in the sense that if a group of tourist are given a good story this makes up an extraordinary experience compared to for example going to the beach or merely staying in a holiday cottage and therefore people supposedly tell about this to friends and relatives when returning home and inspire others to visit the area around Limfjorden or returning themselves.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Lindhart, p. 3

⁹⁷ Gitte Skoubo, p. 7

⁹⁸ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6 + meeting 18.05.09; Susanne Overgaard, p. 6; Jørgen Hansen, p. 9; Dina Overgaard, p. 4; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 5; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1

⁹⁹ Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 5; Susanne Overgaard, p. 6

¹⁰⁰ Dina Overgaard, p. 4; Jørgen Hansen, p. 9

¹⁰¹ Lindhart, p. 3; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1

¹⁰² Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3; Dan Hansen, p. 2

The overall picture does however indicate that TL cannot be considered an attraction in itself but in general it is believed to have the necessary potential to become one if only developed further (cf. 4.5.).

According to several stakeholders and actors, the primary forces of the product is its uniqueness in the sense that the stories are connected to the actual location they are told and whether it is a beautiful landscape, historical events, characters or places, a local industry or the like, they all present characteristics that are specific to Limfjorden which makes it hard to duplicate in other destinations.¹⁰³ Besides that the product is believed to be remarkable for the personal touch and the variation of the stories which among other things distinguish them from the traditional guided tour (cf. 4.2.).¹⁰⁴ Last but not least, the stories are of relatively short duration and cheap¹⁰⁵ which probably facilitate the decision making process as participation in a story arrangement will not take up much time or money. However, they uniqueness could be questioned seeing that most likely all destinations have one or several characteristics they consider exceptional and by implementing storytelling as a tool they would seemingly be able to provide a tourist product similar to that of TL.

3.2. One product, several destinations

By the beginning of 2009 a new website has been launched (www.visitlimfjorden.com) by means of which the network constellation appears as one joint destination. Of the content of the website it is evident that the Network of Limfjorden consists of a variety of tourist actors not directly involved in TL, such as tourist attractions (e.g. museums); activities (e.g. the route of Snaps); and accommodations (e.g. holiday houses, camping sites, inns and hotels) to mention a few (see www.visitlimfjorden.com), however, TL does appear as a dominant part of the network cooperation which, as mentioned, is confirmed by several TL stakeholders (cf. 2.1.).

Nonetheless, whether the network cooperation and TL as a tourist product has actually contributed to one overall destination centered on Limfjorden seems to be an ambiguous matter. In general, Limfjorden is believed to constitute a natural foundation for joining forces in a tourism context and cooperating across established destination areas as they are connected by the water – i.e. it makes sense to aim at uniting the area as one destination.¹⁰⁶

A stakeholder stresses that the network cooperation undoubtedly has contributed to more solidarity among destinations around Limfjorden¹⁰⁷ but looking at the distribution of TL stories reveals that the network cooperation doesn't cover the whole area but is clearly centered at the western end of the fiord (cf. Fig. 3). One stakeholder explains the lack of total coverage by the fact that some destinations in the east are quite different than the ones in the western part of Limfjorden – the western destinations, on the contrary, are similar in relation to the size and number of tourists which makes cross-destination collaboration easier.¹⁰⁸ Another stakeholder thinks that tourism in general shouldn't focus on old structures based on municipality borders but instead be directed more towards developing experiences and activities that “make sense” without being bounded by

¹⁰³ Susanne Overgaard, p. 2; Dina Overgaard, p. 4-5; Jørgen Hansen, p. 6-7; Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3; Dan Hansen, p. 3; Lindhart, p. 2

¹⁰⁴ Susanne Overgaard, p. 5; Chresten, p. 2

¹⁰⁵ Dina Overgaard, p. 4

¹⁰⁶ Dina Overgaard, p. 1; Susanne Overgaard, p. 2; Jørgen Hansen, p. 3; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 4

¹⁰⁷ Jørgen Hansen, p. 22

¹⁰⁸ Susanne Overgaard, p. 4

destinations; therefore cross-geographical product constellations do not necessarily have to cover Limfjorden from one end to the other if it doesn't make any sense to do so.¹⁰⁹ Seen in the light of this TL apparently has been a step towards establishing at least part of Limfjorden as one destination because it integrates a number of actors from different destinations within a common product frame.

Nonetheless, the engagement and investment by the individual stakeholders and actors also has to be taken into consideration. According to the interviewed tourist agencies, the network as such doesn't play a significant role in their individual tourism planning – in fact TL is the only thing within the network that touches upon the local tourism.¹¹⁰ While one tourist agency stresses that it would like that stronger relationships were established within the network because a number of constellations among destinations at Limfjorden are sensible in relation to destination development,¹¹¹ another agent clearly admits that focus primarily is on running the local destination and explains that they do not consider Limfjorden as the nature attraction with greatest potential in relation to tourism development in their area and efforts therefore tend to be directed elsewhere.¹¹²

However, it is noteworthy that during interviews with actors and storytellers focus was in many occasions directed towards the specific local destination or the individual actor's own product rather than TL as one consistent whole.¹¹³ Only a few interviewees accentuated the actual gathering of stories from different areas as a key advantage of the product¹¹⁴ and a storyteller explicitly gives the impression that operating as storyteller is done the same way whether or not the story is part of TL: *"One day we were told that it was actually a "Tale of Limfjorden" we were telling... well, we just kept on doing what we used to, telling and developing the story the best we can".*¹¹⁵

Thus, stakeholders and actors seem to agree that TL to some extent joined together the localities around Limfjorden as one destination but the lack of engagement in the network cooperation and the fact that issues about the story arrangement in several occasions is not considered in relation to the overall product indicate a certain degree of inconsistency where focus still is directed more towards the local destination areas or the individual product offering than TL as a unified whole. Hence, the general picture of Limfjorden as a tourist destination is that the area can hardly be considered as one united destination but far more as several destinations collaborating on one common tourist product. TL's status as a niche product might make it insufficient to establish a strong sense of solidarity among the involved stakeholders and actors which seems a necessity in order to develop in to one unified tourist destination.

¹⁰⁹ Dina Overgaard, p. 1+3

¹¹⁰ Dina Overgaard, p. 2; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 2

¹¹¹ Dina Overgaard, p. 3

¹¹² Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 4

¹¹³ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Chresten, p. 1; Christian Konge, p. 1+4; Lindhart, p. 4

¹¹⁴ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3; Dan Hansen, p. 1

¹¹⁵ Chresten, p. 3

3.3. Marketing

3.3.1. Website and pamphlet – a presentation of the stories

As mentioned, a new website (www.visitlimfjorden.com) has been launched in which the activities and products within the network of Limfjorden is presented and in regard of the promotional intentions TL is assigned a dominant position. Besides the joint website and the references made at the homepages of the individual destinations – the primary market communication of TL appears in form of an annual promotional pamphlet (Netværk Limfjorden 2009) in which short descriptions, a map and a calendar of each story arrangement are presented.

The story descriptions are written by the individual actors¹¹⁶ and while some story presentations accentuate the actual *telling* of stories as part of the event (e.g. no. 11, 12, 24) others seem to neglect this aspect and merely present the locality and therefore appear more or less as “ordinary” tourist attractions (e.g. no. 14, 25). On the face of it, this could indicate that the storytelling actors differ in their understanding of which role “storytelling” plays in the product – i.e. whether it is the story or the location that sells the product doesn’t appear as a clear-cut understanding. For the matter of clarity extracts from two story presentations – both from museums – are presented below (Table 2). While the first (left column) at different occasions stresses that telling of stories will take place, the other (right column) merely gives a matter-of-fact presentation of the museum and its exhibition.

Hjerl Hede – the Nature and the “Rakkere” around Flyndersø	The Wood Museum of Oddense – a Museum of Wood Work.
The Open-air Museum of Hjerl Hede was founded by H.P. Hjerl Hansen. He was (...) Today Hjerl Hede is one of the most well-known open-air museums in Denmark. The telling in Hjerl Hede will be a guided tour around the museum village. You will hear stories about the houses and farms, the handcraft and the life in the village and afterwards the “rakker” will lead you on a trip out in the moor, telling you about the nature, the lake and the life of the “rakkere” in the area around Flyndersø. The rakkere were (...)	In the Museum of Wood, the large rooms of 1000 square metres contain exhibitions and workshops with 150 old machines for woodwork dating from the 19 th century till present time. Since 1999 international sculpture symposiums have been held. The sculptures are exhibited at the museum. Thus, the museum offers an abundant exhibition of old machines, tool for handcraft, sculptures, wood carving work and art of turning. The museum is open Tuesday and Thursdays of July from 10-16 or on reservation.

Table 2 Story presentations (Source: Network Limfjorden 2009 [own translation, JRKL])

Seeing that the pamphlet leaves only a limited space, the presentations are rather brief and longer presentations are instead put on the website where a certain communicative standardizing has been elaborated as they are all written by the communicative secretary.¹¹⁷ However, in many of the descriptions the story aspect is still not particularly emphasized and consequently the presentations both on the website and the pamphlet mostly appear to be a factual introduction to the topic and/or information about the course of the arrangement.

¹¹⁶ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6

¹¹⁷ Jørgen Hansen, p. 5

The intention of presenting the actual content of the arrangement is naturally to promote the different story arrangement and inspire tourist to pay a visit but according to the communicative secretary another dimension is to clarify the circumstances of the individual stories in order to have people come with the right expectations and consequently prevent disappointment¹¹⁸ – e.g. as supplement to the presentations it appears if a story is “mostly for adults” (story no. 3), if own transportation is required (no. 2, 6), if some impediments for people with walking disabilities exist (no. 7), if reservation is necessary (no. 21, 31) etc.¹¹⁹

However, some descriptions do actually involve storytelling by presenting small fragments of what seemingly refer to stories given in the arrangement:

“It was destiny that Lady Olga Sponneck on a bike trip in the summer of 1928 accidentally passed by the decayed Convent of Ørslev. She sat down at the roadside to have lunch and was immediately impressed by the sight...” (www.visitlimfjorden.dk [own translation]).

“Whether the Manor of Hessel is haunted? Of course it is... A girl that worked at the farm...” (www.visitlimfjorden.dk [own translation]).

So although to a limited degree, examples of storytelling do appear in the market communication on the website (but not yet in the pamphlet) and apparently this could have the function of some kind of appetizer that might inspire a visit in order to hear the full version of the story.

3.3.2. Press releases

Due to economic scarcity, the promotional efforts center to a high degree on press releases of which some refer to the promotion of the TL product in general and sent to national and regional newspapers while others are written with reference to the individual storytelling location and sent only to regional and local newspapers in the particular areas where the TL stories are told.¹²⁰ Like the web-presentations, press releases from the network are written by the communication secretary and according to one storytelling actor, this structure both entails advantages and some disadvantages: first of all it saves the individual actor some time as it can be quite time consuming to write the press releases necessary during a full season but at the same time the local newspaper might have greater incitement to bring an article if it is provided by a local tourism actor and not a broader network cooperation.¹²¹ Although press releases seem to be used to a great extend, another actor would like them to be even more widespread and refers to a situation where a journalist at a dominant newspaper in the neighboring municipality – not included in the network of Limfjorden – didn’t know about the existence of TL.¹²² Whether this is a result of the newspaper not receiving press releases or they just don’t bring them, does not appear from the research but with good reason press coverage should include surrounding municipalities in order to attract additional visitors – e.g. in form of one-day tourists – from outside the local area.

¹¹⁸ Jørgen Hansen, p. 7

¹¹⁹ Cf. Netværk Limfjorden 2009 or www.visitlimfjorden.com

¹²⁰ Jørgen Hansen, p. 2

¹²¹ Anna Noe Boevin, p. 2

¹²² Lindhart, p. 3

3.3.3. Storytellers promoting other stories...

The individual storytellers are also included as ‘marketing tool’ seeing that the product guidelines (cf. Fig. 4) ask them to recommend other TL stories to the visitors. This form of internal promotion is believed to be an effective means to create a better flow of tourists between different stories¹²³ and supports the intention of establishing story routes based on a theme or a geographical area.

Having a look at the internal statistics of TL, it seems an obvious way to promote the stories as 65% of the received answers in the questionnaires put that attending one of the story arrangements have made them want to visit other stories.¹²⁴ However, both a stakeholder at management level as well as a storytelling actor express a wish for that storytellers in general get better at selling each other’s stories than it’s the case¹²⁵ and research observations seems to confirm a lack of internal recommendations; only one storyteller did at the end of his story explicitly make reference to TL and recommended the participants to visit other stories and furthermore it was the only place where promotional pamphlets was laid out and the fact that a considerable number was actually taken seems to support that one story arrangement could actually have an encouraging effect on the participants.¹²⁶

In order to improve and enhance the internal marketing, it is accentuated that the individual storytellers need more knowledge about the content of the other stories which is furthermore acknowledged to be obtainable through a higher degree internal information sharing¹²⁷ – specifically an actor would like the “kick off” meetings to be reintroduced as it provided the opportunity of having storytellers present their stories to each other¹²⁸ but on the matter concern once again is related to the number of actors and storytellers actually showing up that is believed to be scarce.¹²⁹ On the face of it, attention once more seems to be directed towards that several actors’ might lack engagement or the feeling of ownership towards the overall product.

3.3.4. Storytelling and branding

Although one stakeholder considers TL as a branding and image creating product, it is admitted that the stories are not purposefully used as a branding tool and the effect – though difficult to measure – is believed merely to be due to the media often mentioning the product.¹³⁰ One storyteller – although referring exclusively to the local destination – believes that the stories could be a promising means to establish a destination image that would be able to attract more tourists to the area.¹³¹



Figure 4 Product logo

¹²³ Gitte Skoubo, p. 8

¹²⁴ Statistics based on numbers from the network’s own questionnaires 2008.

¹²⁵ Gitte Skoubo, p. 8; Lindhart, p. 3

¹²⁶ Observation #6

¹²⁷ Gitte Skoubo, p. 8; Lindhart, p. 3

¹²⁸ Lindhart, p. 3

¹²⁹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 8

¹³⁰ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6

¹³¹ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1

On the front/back page of the promotional pamphlet (2009) as well as on the website, a logo appears (Fig. 4).

The design clearly has a maritime appeal; the “star” figure that takes up a very dominant position in the logo reminds one of a compass and gives connotation related to navigation at sea, the circular form resembles the port-hole of a ship and the framing of the product name “*Limfjordsfortællinger*” and the network “*Netværk Limfjorden*” makes you think of a nautical metal sign that could carry the name of a ship. The brownish colour of the logo furthermore has a historical and “authentic” expression that might even lead ones imagination towards “treasure hunting” – an image that is supported by the compass. The appearance of the logo seems to match up with the some of the fundamental values of TL seeing that the overall product framework takes it point of departure in the water of Limfjorden and the stories seek a telling with historical and cultural perspectives (cf. 4.3.). However, not all story events are linked directly to the maritime perspective presented in the logo and this might cause wrong connotations related to stories told within a museum of Woodwork, a forest or a diary, to mention a few (cf. Table 1).

The text within the “port-hole” of the logo – “*Fjorden rundt*” – openly positions the TL stories as a way of making a tour around Limfjorden which correlates nicely with the introductive lines suggesting that the story themes represent “routes of stories” (cf. 1.1.) and moreover it plays on the connotations of going treasure hunting to find the good stories of Limfjorden which also seems to suggest that the area is considered as one destination. Thus, the logo contains some of the fundamental values behind the TL stories which might serve as a branding tool for Limfjorden as tourist destination – maybe as the destination with “an ocean of stories”. However, the logo doesn’t take up a dominant position in the market communication of Limfjorden but mostly serves as a product logo on the website¹³² and in the promotional pamphlet of TL (2009). Consequently, TL is not being considered as a common brand and presumably it doesn’t constitute a destination image of Limfjorden as one destination either. Moreover, the overall product as it appears in practise seemingly doesn’t come up the management and communicative intentions of pursuing a “route of stories” (cf. 3.4.) and consequently a clash appears between the market communication on the one hand and the actual product setup, the story events, on the other.

Finally, one could wonder why the network association is mentioned in the logo: is it the network or the stories that are meant to attract tourist to the destination of Limfjorden? The name of the network, i.e. the management body that only controls and coordinates product development and sale, is most certainly of no interest for tourists considering Limfjorden as their next holiday destination and having the name included in the logo therefore merely seems as an intrusive element if the logo is to be used in a clear market communication and branding strategy.

3.3.5. More marketing wanted

Regarding the amount and type of the abovementioned marketing activities of TL, several storytellers accentuate that improvements are mostly wanted since the promotional pamphlet is insufficient.¹³³ Some suggest that posters could be made¹³⁴ which might make the stories more visible in the local area by placing posters where people normally go about – e.g. in supermarkets –

¹³² Cf. www.visitlimfjorden.com

¹³³ Lindhart, p. 3; Chresten, p. 3; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 2; Dan Hansen, p. 4

¹³⁴ Lindhart, p. 3; Dan Hansen, p. 4

and the same could be achieved by making use of radio advertising.¹³⁵ Some storytellers take it a step further and although being aware that it might be a question of more resources, one storyteller proposes that media coverage was expanded so it didn't only cover the local media¹³⁶ and another believes, as mentioned, that the stories potentially could become a destination brand (however, the example given refers to the local destination of the particular story and not Limfjorden in general).¹³⁷

Seeing that the storytelling actors depend on the number of visitors it only seems natural that storytellers worry about marketing as it is an obvious means to create attention about the product and consequently attract more visitors. However, it is noteworthy that, despite accentuating the lack of marketing efforts in relation to TL, only a minor part of them do in fact recommend and promote the other stories – making profit by the visitors already present presumably would be the first obvious step towards an improved marketing.

3.3.6. From where do tourists hear about TL

Though insight into the participant behaviour is based on a rather small sample of questionnaires (cf. 1.6.3.) it gives some random indications on which kind of media has attracted the attention and drawn the present participants to a story arrangement of TL.

One way of dividing the listed types of media could be the following three categories: the general media (radio, newspapers), tourism related media (tourism brochures, tourist agencies, TL promotional pamphlet, internet etc.) and direct media (mouth-to-mouth, information on the location, internal marketing).

However, the results are based on an open-ended question and an exact classification of media is not achievable. First of all, “advertisements” appear important as about 30% of the participants inform that it has been the primary source to knowing about TL and obviously, advertisements most certainly cover both the general media and tourism related media. Another unclassified source appears in form of the “internet” (9.3%) as no indications are made concerning the particular locations and therefore the networks own website, sites of the different destinations and publicity looked up elsewhere must be included.

Not surprisingly, sources directly connected to tourism appear frequently in the answers (25.4%); but what seems more relevant to notice is that newspapers and word-of-mouth (9.3% respectively) also make up considerable sources indicating that press releases do have an effect on the number of visitors and the word-of-mouth effect implies that the stories are generating positive experiences worth telling about or even making it worth visiting other stories. This could suggest that considerable effect would be achievable if storytellers recommend other TL stories – unfortunately only 0.85% (1 person) visited the particular story as a consequence of having been informed hereof in another TL story and the assumption of a low rate of “internal promotion” (cf. 3.3.3.) seems supported.

¹³⁵ Dan Hansen, p. 4

¹³⁶ Chresten, p. 3

¹³⁷ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1

3.4. Single stories with integrated intentions

Looking at the product set up, the overall story frame is clearly based on the geographically aspect of Lim-fjorden, having the water as the overall connection between the different stories. Furthermore, a subdivision of the stories appears as they are divided in topical themes (cf. 1.3.). The selection of the stories is, as mentioned (cf. 2.5.), handled by the individual tourist agencies that choose stories from the particular destination in accordance with the thematic constellation; according to one tourist agency the intention is to have stories covering the different thematic aspects in order to provide an assorted supply of stories.¹³⁸

So stories can apparently be linked together either by being within the same theme or being situated within the same local destination. This seems in great keeping with the intention of TL which is – as intro lines of the promotional pamphlet¹³⁹ also suggest (cf. 1.1.) – to have tourists visit more than one telling either by settling in one place and attend stories from different themes or pursuing a specific theme across destinations around Limfjorden.¹⁴⁰

A couple of storytellers express that the intention of continued visits are actually put in to effect by several visitors as they often experience participants telling about stories they have visited in other areas or that they intend to follow other stories.¹⁴¹ Making observations of two stories located in the same geographical area on the same day, this was confirmed as a couple appeared in both stories and furthermore had another story in the same area planned for the following day.¹⁴²

However, the internal statistics do not show as clear a tendency as one then could expect; only about 16% have actually visited other TL stories, equally divided in 1 or 2 more stories, besides the one attended when answering the questionnaire. In other words, the tourists presumably only visit one or at best a couple of stories – supposedly often situated within a rather limited area – and do not follow a ‘route’ of stories around Limfjorden.

As it appeared above (cf. 3.3.3.) this might be strengthened by improving the storytellers’ promotion and recommendation of other stories. Nonetheless, the internal linkage between the different stories seems mostly to promote a “local story tour” where a number of stories covering different thematic aspects of the destination could provide an interesting many-sided idea of the place chosen for a holiday. However, the connection between stories within the intended thematic routes remain at a superficial level; history, industry, nature etc. all leave a very broad scope for telling a story and the relation between many stories are merely the fact that they are situated near to Limfjorden causing that the line of stories presumably doesn’t set the stage for a serial story and consequently it might not be obvious for the tourist to follow a thematic route.

3.5. Target groups and visitors

From the networks own statistics it appears that in 2008 a total of 4.002 visitors visited the story arrangements, an average of 12.1 per story, and the typical guests were 44-64 years old (approx. 58%), accommodated in a holiday cottage (approx. 56%).¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Dina Overgaard, p. 3-4

¹³⁹ Netværk Limfjorden 2009, p. 2

¹⁴⁰ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6; Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

¹⁴¹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 6; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3

¹⁴² Observation #1+2

¹⁴³ Networks own statistics 2008

This seems in accordance with the assumptions made by stakeholders as the principal target group of the TL stories is believed to be Danish tourists, middle-aged/elderly couples traveling without children, coming alone or in company with friends and/or relatives.¹⁴⁴ Although some younger couples also visit and a few stories even seems suitable for families with children TL stakeholders and actors fundamentally all agree that the majority of the stories mostly aim at the mature audience with interest in culture, history or nature.

The observations made this year seem to confirm this picture as all visitors were Danish with a clear dominance of middle-aged to elderly couples (45-60+) without children.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the few children that actually attended a story arrangement seemed all at some point during the story to lose interest which showed both in that they were obviously becoming restless – i.e. running around, looking elsewhere, fumbling with mobile phones etc. – and in parents either disapproving their behavior or trying to cheer them up through affectionately pats or small hugs.¹⁴⁶ This supports that the stories are mainly addressing the mature visitors.

Hence, the profile of the main target and visitor group is apparently consistent with the typical tourist visiting destinations at Limfjorden (cf. 1.3.) and as such it seems to be adapted to the tourists present in the area. In the light of destination development, TL might contribute in being an interesting offer to the tourists which might keep them in the area longer, visit other local destinations or return as visitors later on, but it might also maintain the product in a situation where it primarily will be able to attract visitors already present in the area and not foster an increased attraction of new tourists. In order to be a destination developing product in the long run it seems essential to enlarge the target group and launch new initiatives to attract additional tourist to Limfjorden.

Despite that the main target group and most visitors are overnight tourists coming from other areas, locals do also visit the story arrangements,¹⁴⁷ especially the year a story gives its first performances,¹⁴⁸ and according to the questionnaires available, 28% considered themselves as locals. Besides that, visitors with other relationship to the location or the topic also appear among the participants¹⁴⁹ – e.g. former residents wanting to relive old memories.¹⁵⁰

3.6. Season extension

As mentioned, this year TL presents stories outside the main season for the first time as story arrangements are held in 3 national holiday weeks during spring and fall and the network of Limfjorden seemingly introduces a strategy in line with the national initiative by VisitDenmark with focus on the creating of “all-year tourism” in which Northern Jutland among other regions takes actively part.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6; Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 5

¹⁴⁵ Observations #1-6

¹⁴⁶ Observations #1, 4, 5, 6

¹⁴⁷ Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 1; Dan Hansen, p. 1; Lindhart, p. 1; Christian Konge, p. 1; Observations # 4

¹⁴⁸ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Dina Overgaard, p. 5

¹⁴⁹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 5-6; Dan Hansen, p. 1-2; Observation # 1, 2, 5

¹⁵⁰ Observation #2; Dan Hansen, p. 2

¹⁵¹ www.visitdenmark.com; www.visitnordjylland.com

However, not all 34 stories are available in the shoulder seasons – i.e. during winter holiday only 18 stories are told while Easter holidays and autumn holidays count 28 stories respectively.¹⁵² Hence, several storytellers are apparently not able or willing to provide stories for a period that extends outside summer holidays, and according to one of the stakeholders, one of the problems in extend the season is that you cannot bind storytellers to deliver a story once a week all year so if the seasons are to be prolonged it requires alternative initiatives – e.g. offering packages of overnight stays that include story tickets (cf. 4.5.3).¹⁵³

Furthermore, seeing that the product is not believed to attract tourists on its own an extension of the TL season most certainly cannot be expected to have a prolonging effect on tourism around Limfjorden in general and the stories will have to do with drawing on the amount of visitors already present in the area which is significantly lower than during July and August (cf. 1.3.). Though TL presumably will not have any influence on the number of tourists visiting Limfjorden in the shoulder seasons, the stories might contribute in improving the experience of those present as the more attractions that are available outside main season the better will the impression of the destination probably be. But whether or not the stories during low season turn out to be a success – measured in number of visitors – is still not settled as this year's statistics is not yet made public.¹⁵⁴

3.7. Cross-sector cooperation

One of the initiator of TL describes that the museums play a central part in the stories and he believes that within Danish tourism the network of Limfjorden represents one of the best collaborations between the tourism sector and museums which is a consequence of the museums realizing that TL actually wants to deliver authentic stories.¹⁵⁵ A storytelling actor – and head of one the museums in the network – confirms that the museum has gained a lot of knowledge through the cooperation with the tourism trade.¹⁵⁶ Whether the cooperation can be classified as a benchmark within Danish tourism shall be left unstated but it does illustrate that TL has created a cross-sector relationship between two professions that formerly seemed absent in the area.

Moreover, partners whose main activities are even more remote from the tourism sector also appear within the cooperation of TL. The storytellers gathered within the theme “Temptations of Limfjorden” count several local farms, a dairy and a brewery by means of which TL involves actors whose *raison d'être* belongs to a completely different business sector – i.e. the food industry. In other words, evident cross-sector cooperation appears and TL seems at this point to follow a tendency that apparently gains a steadily increasing footing within tourism, classified as “food tourism” (e.g. Weaver & Lawton 2006, p. 139).

Furthermore, planning for future product development also concerns cross-sector constellations as visits in companies and factories within other commercial trades are considered an opportunity for new stories¹⁵⁷ – specifically with reference to prolonging the season (cf. 4.5.3.).

¹⁵² Netværk Limfjorden, 2009; p. 40

¹⁵³ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

¹⁵⁴ Statistics are presented at the annual evaluation meeting on 6th of October 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Jørgen Hansen, p. 5-6

¹⁵⁶ Susanne Overgaard, p. 4

¹⁵⁷ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

3.8. Storytelling and packaging

At the face of it, TL in itself constitutes a package in the sense that many stories take its point of departure in locations that also without TL were considered as a tourist product and furthermore, several stories already exist in some form before they are implemented in the common storytelling product.¹⁵⁸ In that way, the initiative to some extent concerns a systemizing of tourist products into one overall package where storytelling appears as the common denominator.

As mentioned, an attempt to establish another form of tourism packaging has also been made by initiating collaboration with the local inns in order to generate a product that seemingly would consist of a more complete tourist package seeing that it was meant to include accommodation and food together with ticket for some TL stories representing local tourist experiences – but it didn't come off as planned and today such packaging still does not exist.

4. Understanding and application of storytelling

4.1. The good story – briefly told

Within the network of Limfjorden, the concept of “storytelling” is to some extent considered as an ambiguous term where a definition is a matter of context¹⁵⁹ and especially the English term brings up associations about promotional strategies which the Danish word “*historiefortælling*” doesn't suggest.¹⁶⁰

Not surprisingly, storytelling is considered the foundation of the TL product¹⁶¹ and although some of the stakeholders also use storytelling actively as a marketing tool within their own destination areas¹⁶² this is only to a limited extent the case in relation to TL¹⁶³ (cf. 3.3). Storytelling – or “the telling of a story” – within TL is mainly practiced as a storyteller delivering a tale by word of mouth to a group of listeners and is basically conceived as a tool to communicate knowledge and authentic information in an interesting and appealing way.¹⁶⁴ The initiative to use storytelling as a communicative instrument to guide a group of tourists is described as a natural consequence of change in demand seeing that tourists nowadays call for more than just relaxation, sea and sand but also requires knowledge about culture, history and nature that they wouldn't be able to discover on their own.¹⁶⁵

“*Everybody loves a good story*” manifests one of the actors of TL as the main reason of why storytelling is a great tool to “get to people”¹⁶⁶ and according to the interviewed storytellers some of the important building blocks in providing a good story are drama, humour and a mixture of facts

¹⁵⁸ Susanne Overgaard, p. 5; Dina Overgaard, p. 4; Dan Hansen, p. 1; Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 2; Chresten, p. 1

¹⁵⁹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 6; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Henrik, p. 2; Christian Konge, p. 2

¹⁶⁰ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1

¹⁶¹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6

¹⁶² Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Gitte Skoubo, p. 6

¹⁶³ Gitte Skoubo, p. 6

¹⁶⁴ Susanne Overgaard, p. 6; Jørgen Hansen, p. 11; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6; Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Anna, p. 1; Henrik, p. 2; Dan, p. 2; Christian Konge, p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Jørgen Hansen, p. 11; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6; Dina Overgaard, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Susanne Overgaard, p. 6.

and fiction.¹⁶⁷ According to one of the interviewees, drama can be provided by elements such as love or ghosts stories which is believed to make a story more exciting, relevant and memorable,¹⁶⁸ and identically another describes how returning visitors always reminds him if he forgets to tell one of the dramatic anecdotes.¹⁶⁹ Fun, humoristic touch and a happy twinkle that make people smile or laugh also promote a memorable story; facts or anecdotes can both be delivered with a more comical perspective or be followed by a small joke which is essential in order to charm the listeners, involve them and obtain the best response.¹⁷⁰

Although authenticity appears as one of the main pillars of the TL stories, nonfactual parts appears to be an elevating part of a story, i.e. facts are better off if they are served with personality or a humoristic twist.¹⁷¹ Yet another way of making historical and cultural fact more accessible and memorable is to connect it with name given personalities or locations, an event or a physical object¹⁷² – these elements seems to serve as some kind of tangible evidence. In short, drama, humour and the right mixture of facts and fiction make a good story that gets to people and is something they will remember.¹⁷³

4.2. Not just another guided tour...?

Storytelling is more than just a matter of *what* the story contains – in fact one storyteller accentuates that it “*is more about the way it is done than it is about its contents*”¹⁷⁴ and seemingly this statement hits the nail of how the TL stakeholders and actors believe a storyteller differs from the more traditional tour guide.

The following paragraphs will therefore not only focus on the perceptions and practice of *what* a good story should contain but also on *how* it should to be and is delivered.

4.2.1. The 10 Commandments of a Guide

When you enter TL as a new storyteller, you will receive an information portfolio that among other things contains *The '10 Commandments' of a Guide* (see Fig. 5) which is a list of guidelines about basic rules in relation to delivering a story to a group of guests or listeners (i.e. item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8) as well as more practical requests and recommendations (i.e. item 7, 9, 10 and subsequent comments).

The “10 Commandments” of a Guide

1. Treat the listeners as your own personal guests
2. “Listen” to the listeners
3. Involve the listeners – ask them questions
4. Spice up your story with anecdotes and humour
5. Relate your story to persons or events
6. Have some natural breaks – change between walking and standing still
7. Cancel outdoors arrangements if it is thunder
8. Admit if you don’t know the answer to a question
9. Refer to / recommend the other arrangements and facilities within the area
10. End the tour with a “thank you”

Remember the portfolio, sign, change, mobile phone and emergency kit.

Figure 5 Guidelines for the storytellers
(Source: Information material, Netværk Limfjorden [Own translation, JRKL])

¹⁶⁷ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Chresten, p. 1; Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 2; Dan Hansen, p. 2; N.H. Lindhart, p. 2

¹⁶⁸ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1

¹⁶⁹ Chresten, p. 1

¹⁷⁰ N.H. Lindhart, p. 2; Dan Hansen, p. 2; Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 2; Chresten, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ N.H. Lindhart, p. 2; Chresten, p. 1; Christian Konge, p. 2

¹⁷² Henrik, p. 2; Dan Hansen, p. 2.

¹⁷³ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Chresten, p. 1; Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 2; Lindhart, p. 2; Dan Hansen, p. 2

¹⁷⁴ Henrik, p. 2

Although it might just be a simple matter of semantics, the first things that strikes you, is why the designation “a guide” has been chosen within the guidelines of a storytelling product that apparently wants to differentiate itself from the traditional guided tours. To some point it might indicate that the perception of differences between the guide on the one hand and the storyteller on the other might not be as strong as it could be expected.

According to the product coordinator, these guidelines have been used since the first TL stories were launched¹⁷⁵ which seemingly could be one explanation to the choice of words, bearing in mind that the initiators didn’t look for theoretical concept to develop the product but merely believed that improvement of the communication of local characteristics to tourists should be done in a more interesting and inspiring way.

Since then these items have apparently constituted the only streamlining of the stories; no workshops or seminars have been held in order to train the storytellers and/or share knowledge about the “art of telling a story”.¹⁷⁶ Yet again the internal communication appears as a one-way street with information and guidelines merely floating down stream and at this particular point a higher degree of horizontal “knowledge flow” in form of workshops or meetings with the purpose to train and discuss the best way of delivering a good story seems quite relevant in order to learn from each other. It would most certainly provide for example “newcomers” with an excellent opportunity to learn from the more experienced storytellers within the network – a practice which is actually seen within individual storytelling organizations of TL where storytellers pass on knowledge to their successors.¹⁷⁷

As we shall see in the following paragraphs, a number of the listed items in the TL guidance to a storyteller can in fact easily be identified in the way the stories are told and the perceptions of stakeholders and actors, and thus the 10 points supposedly make up some kind of streamlining of the act of telling stories within TL.

4.2.2. The storytellers

Even a quick glimpse at the different type of actors involved in TL reveals that the storytellers make up a diverse group of people with very different backgrounds – from museums keepers and nature counsellors to farmers, dairymen and brewers or local volunteers with a story on their mind – and on the face of it a resemblance between the storytellers could seem difficult to locate. However, characteristics such as passion and enthusiasm for telling their story are described as common denominators for all the storytellers seeing that often the story topic is of personal interest and has been studied for a long time which to some extent makes the storyteller an “expert” within the field.¹⁷⁸ This taking pleasure in telling stories and special interest in the subject of the story also becomes apparent during the research observations where the joy of telling a story seems to show through a twinkle and a constant smile.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Gitte Skoubo (mail correspondence 27.08.2009)

¹⁷⁶ Gitte Skoubo (mail correspondence 27.08.2009)

¹⁷⁷ Chresten, p. 1; Dan Hansen, p. 3

¹⁷⁸ Jørgen Hansen, p. 7

¹⁷⁹ Observations

The interest in the topic, however, seems to originate in several ways. Storytellers telling about their line of work presumably have some kind of special interest due to professional pride – a museum employee naturally take an interest in history, nature counselors in nature, a farmer in animal hold and cultivation, etc. This pride in one's profession as a main foundation of the story is explicitly stated by one the interviewees.¹⁸⁰ Besides that, interviews show that enthusiasm also comes of “belonging” to a place – i.e. as the result of being born and raised in the local area – which seems to be a very dominant characteristic for the TL storytellers,¹⁸¹ and thus, the interest in the topic probably advance engagement in telling the story.

Nonetheless, during most of the interviews made with storytellers another reason why they want to be involved in a storytelling product such as TL also became clear; continuously questions were answered or examples given by the telling of a small anecdote and/or personal narratives. In other words, telling a story appears to be rooted in most of the storytellers' personalities – they just can't help it. One of the storytellers also explains that he has always enjoyed telling a story and by becoming a nature counselor it just became a part of his job as well.¹⁸² One of the tourist agencies also accentuates that some people just have the gift to tell a story in a way that: *“listeners are carried away and begin to visualize things so they feel that they are part of the story”*.¹⁸³ As mentioned earlier a good story is believed not only to depend on its content but more on the way it is being told and thus, an important aspect of a good story seems to originate in the storytellers' enthusiasm and the ability to deliver a story in an engaging way. Apart from the nature counselors, none of the interviewed storytellers have had any professional training in how to tell a story and it appears to be a skill they have either as a natural talent or something they have learned through practical experiences.

4.2.3. Engaging story breaks

The majority of the TL stories seems to be built up around the structure of a circular tour meaning that the group of listeners is taken for a walk, drive or a sail through a particular spatial area – e.g. that of a city, a nature ground or a company. During the stories that contain a tour on foot, a number of “telling stops” are made along the route in which the participants take the position of a semicircle around the storyteller that delivers “a chapter” of the story. The course of the tour hereby changes between walking and talking/listening providing what in the guidelines are called natural breaks (cf. Fig. 4).

This way of communicating information doesn't seem different than the traditional guided tour around a museum or within a city walk. Nonetheless, following some of the story arrangements showed that during the breaks – i.e. walking from one telling stop to the next – the participants begin to talk mutually about the content of the story, both with the people, with whom they are travelling, as well as other visitors and the storyteller. This seems to be exactly what some of the actors and stakeholders accentuate as one of the result of a good story; that it gets to people and generates curiosity, which makes the participant tell stories themselves and seek more information about the topic either by asking the storyteller or afterwards doing research on their own.¹⁸⁴ One possible explanation could also be that participants choose to visit a particular TL story arrangement

¹⁸⁰ Lindhart, p. 2

¹⁸¹ 5 out of 6 storytellers in the interviews were born in the area where they are telling stories.

¹⁸² Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 1

¹⁸³ Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6

¹⁸⁴ Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6; Susanne Overgaard, p. 7

due to a preceding curiosity about the topic or the area meaning that a common interest is present within the group of listeners.

Often the breaks also involve conversations of more chitchat character – e.g. about the surroundings and other “must-see” places in the nearby areas – and to some extent the walk between stories take form of a “normal” walk among a group of friends. Thus the participants seemingly do not only engage in the story but also in the social aspect of experiencing within a group.

Thus, it appears that participant engagement does not necessarily claim induced activities or elements but on the contrary to some extent lies within the spontaneous arise of the participants part-taking in the story, its context and the informal social contact with the other “characters” of the story arrangement.

4.2.4. Storyteller-listener relationship

One of the things that appears from the section above is apparently that in order to transform a guided tour into a story it is not only necessary that information is provided by a guide or storyteller but also that it is *received* by the listeners. According to several interviewees the relationship between the storyteller and the listeners is of vital importance to ensure this – if personal contact isn’t established the audience is lost and the arrangement can hardly be classified as a story.¹⁸⁵

Storytellers accentuate the importance of saying properly hello to people, eye contact and getting physically close to people as important aspects in creating a good relationship.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, it provides the storyteller with a sensation of whether or not he/she has the audience’s attention and the listeners are encouraged to participate by asking questions.¹⁸⁷ If the storyteller loses his/her touch with the audience the story becomes impersonal and might just as well be a CD-recording playing.¹⁸⁸ Thus, the story has to be delivered with engagement and in a living way – i.e. the storyteller cannot turn his/her back to the audience or fumble with papers and manuscripts but has to be present in the story.¹⁸⁹

Additionally, the personal story seems to require proximity which makes it relevant to consider the number of participators in a story arrangement and one stakeholder also accentuates that a story cannot be told to a group of 50 people.¹⁹⁰ However, this seemingly has to be seen in relation to the physical circumstances or surroundings of the story, seeing that storytellers that often have a rather large group of audience do actually not consider this an impediment to personal contact as long as all the listeners have a clear vision and hear of the storyteller – i.e. when a story takes form of a lecture with the audience situated in rows of seats¹⁹¹ or if planned breaks provide the opportunity to get closer to and socialize with some of the participants.¹⁹² In other words, which level of personal contact that is necessary in order to create a good story appears an ambiguous and relative matter.

¹⁸⁵ Chresten, p. 2; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6; Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3; Dan Hansen, p. 3

¹⁸⁶ Chresten, p. 2; Lindhart, p. 2; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 2, Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3

¹⁸⁷ Dan Hansen, p. 3; Chresten, p. 2

¹⁸⁸ Chresten, p. 2

¹⁸⁹ Lindhart, p. 2; Chresten, p. 2; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 2

¹⁹⁰ Dina Overgaard, p. 5

¹⁹¹ Observation #3 & 6 + Lindhart, p. 2; Chresten, p. 2

¹⁹² Anna Noe Bovin, p. 2

The loss of proximity also seems a factor that influences the considerations of future product development concerning the telling in other languages than Danish because various languages within the same arrangements are believed to ruin the story due to the loss of personal contact between the storyteller and the listeners – and the same problematic arises within questions about the use of digital medias such as iPods¹⁹³ (cf. 4.5.).

4.2.5. One audience – one story

As seen above (4.2.2.), the storyteller's enthusiasm and delight are important aspects of a good story. In some instances they are challenged by the fact that one and the same storyteller is the main responsible for delivering a story throughout the whole season so in order to make sure that the job doesn't become boring and merely routine – with damage on the quality of their story as a natural consequence hereof – several of the interviewed storytellers continuously change the story content.¹⁹⁴

The change of content doesn't only serve to maintain the engagement of the teller but the majority of the interviewed storytellers stresses that they attempt to adjust the content to the specific interests of the particular group of listeners in order to make the story more personal and engaging to the audience.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the adjustment of story content is often an act of balance because a group of listeners never make up a homogeneous unity which means that if a story is directed to one part of the group it must be done without losing the attention of the other listeners – e.g. children versus adults.¹⁹⁶

Different levels of identifying and reading the need and wishes of the listeners exist in the practice of the TL storytellers. While some – apparently most of the storytellers – make use of an obvious segmentation strategy such as age (children, adult, seniors) to select a certain focus or tell a joke addressing a particular group within the audience,¹⁹⁷ others intent to fine-tune the story according to the specific interests or backgrounds of the listeners; e.g. adjusting the degree of factual information in proportion to the participants previous knowledge to the topic or area of the story¹⁹⁸ or making a quick enquiry within the group so – whenever possible – the story can be related to the particular area of origin or the jobs of the participants.¹⁹⁹

A manuscript is also considered an endangering element to the liberty of the storyteller and for that reason none of the interviewed storytellers use a definite manuscript.²⁰⁰ This seems, however, due to the rather comprehensive experience of telling a story that the particular storytellers have gained in the course of time. One storyteller explains how a word-by-word manuscript is written down and memorized when he has to give a “lecture” or a “talk”²⁰¹ about a new topic for the first time but it changes over time and when the same lecture has been given for some time it is no longer similar to the original manuscript.²⁰² Another interviewee also remembers that in the beginning of her

¹⁹³ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3; Dina Overgaard, p. 6; Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

¹⁹⁴ Henrik Kjær Bach, p.3, Chresten, p. 2

¹⁹⁵ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Chresten, p. 2; Henrik Kjær Bach, p.1+3, Dan Hansen, p. 3

¹⁹⁶ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Chresten, p. 2, Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 1

¹⁹⁷ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 1, Chresten, p. 2; Lindhart, p. 2; Observations #1 + 6

¹⁹⁸ Susanne Overgaard, p. 6; Observations #1 + 2

¹⁹⁹ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 2; Observation #2

²⁰⁰ Susanne Overgaard, p. 5; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 2; Chresten, p. 2; Lindhart, p. 2; Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁰¹ The storyteller uses the term “*foredrag*” (a lecture or a talk) and not story.

²⁰² Lindhart, p. 2

storytelling career it took a lot of effort to prepare a story arrangement which included the writing of a manuscript and only concurrently with the telling of many stories the ability to improvise and adjust the content according to the audience has developed.²⁰³

On the contrary, manuscripts are also considered as a means despite years of experiences with telling the story. One storyteller is already putting his stories to writing in order to pass them on to other storytellers replacing him²⁰⁴ and another has seriously considered the use of manuscript as a means to remember important details but at the same time he underlines that if this will be the case the script will merely take form of keywords.²⁰⁵

Despite that no manuscript are used, claims such as: “*next time it will be a different tour*”²⁰⁶ and “*I never tell the same story twice*”²⁰⁷ and the fact that only one of the interviewed storytellers admit that no particular adjustments are made according to the audience of the day,²⁰⁸ it seems relevant to elaborate whether majority of storytellers actually tell a *new* story each time. Terms such as adjustment and graduating of the story is also used by several storytellers to describe how changes are made and this does seem more accurate expressions to explain the actual difference from one story arrangement to the next since the overall frame of the story naturally is more or less the same as it follows the locations within it is situated (the nature ground, city, company or ...). For that reasons the changes only touch upon which particular anecdotes are chosen on the day and how much focus is put on one part of the story instead of another. That the best anecdotes are used repeatedly was furthermore confirmed during interviews and observations as small anecdotes used to explain or exemplify statements during interview often were either told within the observed story arrangement as well or obviously told on a regular basis. In other words it seems reasonable to assume that the overall story frame consist of a number of more or less established factual and fictive story parts replacing each other on a random basis and if the same story arrangement is visited twice you might not have the exact same story word-by-word but you will most likely be able to recognize some or many of the small story parts and anecdotes told within the overall topic frame of the story.

4.3. Authenticity

4.3.1. Sources close to reality

Stakeholders within the network underline that a good story is mostly built on a factual foundation and that authenticity plays a significant part in providing relevant information because the stories are not about “putting on a show”.²⁰⁹ Although advantages in relation to deliver a good story most certainly can be gained through the use of fictive elements, the interviews reveal caution concerning fiction and several actors and stakeholders accentuate that authenticity has to be maintained in order

²⁰³ Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

²⁰⁴ Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁰⁵ Chresten, p. 2

²⁰⁶ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3

²⁰⁷ Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁰⁸ Lindhart, p. 4

²⁰⁹ Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6

to secure the credibility of the story.²¹⁰ So most stories, or at least the dominant part of their content, is believed to be as close to reality as possible.²¹¹

In the light of this general wish for an authentic perspective, historical sources do not surprisingly appear as a dominant point of departure in several stories; e.g. one storyteller tells how historical publications of the museum is being used to locate material for the stories,²¹² and in some cases the particular sources are even made evident by the storyteller while telling the story. Especially at one museum related story old newspaper articles and objects from the museum archives were explicitly used to stress the authenticity of the story.²¹³ Yet in another story, references to written sources were not given but instead made on the basis of “common knowledge” about historical events, e.g. the War of 1864, the Wall Street Crash in 1929 etc.²¹⁴

However, despite a dominant focus on authentic and truthful elements within the stories, they are in fact constructed as a mixture between factual information – i.e. years of specific events, foundation of the location, biographies, knowledge about an industrial or agricultural production form etc. – and more fictional touches such as tall stories, myths and legends. So although well documented historical sources and events serve as the primary foundation of the stories, sources of lesser authentic status such as novels and personal narratives are also used significantly. One story apparently takes its point of departure in a novel and its characters and compares it to the *real* life at the time²¹⁵ and another story also uses a novel to describe socio-cultural aspects.²¹⁶ Furthermore, personal narratives appear as important sources to the stories. One storyteller uses a diary as the primary source to tell about past traditions, events and the living conditions for a typical family at that time; the diary is written by a local girl in the beginning of the 20th century which the storyteller mixes with personal narratives that he has been told by local people based on their own experiences and memories.²¹⁷ Similarly, within another story arrangement reference to first-hand stories borrowed from a written source were made: “*I’ve read a book where they had interviewed an 80-year old woman that remembered...*”²¹⁸

New stories and perspectives even sometimes appear by coincidence, e.g. by having a participant in one of the arrangement that has lived through the event or time period that’s being told about and therefore contribute to the story by telling his personal version of it²¹⁹ or storytellers who in a completely different context has been asked to tell a story on a certain topic which later are used as part of a TL story.²²⁰ Yet in other cases, a personal touch is furthermore seen where the actual storyteller has taken over the job from a former storyteller colleague and therefore partly base his/her own story on listening to the former narratives and partly through the gathering of new information.²²¹ In that way stories are continuously passed on to new generations and to new storytellers.

²¹⁰ Chresten, p. 1; Dan Hansen, p. 2; Jørgen Hansen, p. 8; Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Linda Dyrby Pedersen, p. 6

²¹¹ Gitte Skoubo, p. 7; Jørgen Hansen, p. 8

²¹² Anna Noe Bovin, p. 2

²¹³ Observation #1

²¹⁴ Observation #6

²¹⁵ Story no. 2 (Netværk Limfjorden 2009, p. 5)

²¹⁶ Observation #1

²¹⁷ Observation #4; Henrik Kjær Bach; p. 1-2

²¹⁸ Observation #5

²¹⁹ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 2

²²⁰ Lindhart, p. 1

²²¹ Chresten, p. 1; Dan Hansen, p. 1

In other words, historical facts do not only stem from historical documents and publications but are often based on personal tales that, although based on real and authentic stories, do not necessarily paint the general picture. Furthermore, seeing that these stories are exchanged by word-of-mouth, the content and form will most certainly change gradually as a new storyteller often decorates the story with his/her own comments and perspectives. In the light of the sources used to build up the stories, the authentic or factual perspective therefore cannot be understood in the terms of representative and overall historical facts instead a personal touch in form of individual's own narratives seems to play an important part in the stories.

As it appears from "The 10 Commandments" (Fig. 5) the storytellers are in fact asked to tell stories that connect to particular persons and/or events which could be assumed to be best obtained through personal narratives of others and result in the story being more engaging to the listeners as they are able to better identify themselves with the content of the story and consequently it might foster some important advantages in the pursuit of telling "a good story" instead of (just) providing another guided tour.

So fictive elements do appear in the story and the storytellers do in fact see fiction as some kind of "spice" that can be added to the story to make it better. As one storyteller puts it: "*I love to tell a tall story*" and explains by the fact that it makes the telling about cultural history become more alive, exciting, relevant and colourful.²²² One way of doing this is stated to mix historical threads with myth, legends and adventures²²³ and another likewise describes it as a way to serve facts with a twinkle.²²⁴ A further perspective is given by a storyteller in that he loves to twist the truth a bit by adding his own reflections or putting factual statements in a different context than usual in order to make the story entertaining.²²⁵

Though, a distinction between fiction and lies are accentuated and obviously there is a big difference in telling legends about supernatural beings and then putting the wrong numbers within factual information or presenting a myth as if it were really authentic.²²⁶ When telling a tall story it therefore has to be transparent that it is *not* an authentic story so the listeners will not misinterpret the content and the intentions of the story²²⁷ and during observations the fictive nature of the tall stories told either appeared self-evident from the super-natural elements of the story or if not it was explicitly accentuated by the storyteller as "a lie".

Within the course of a particular story arrangement, factual information and fictive stories or personal narratives appear in a continuous alternation. At the stories visited during the research process the only common denominator observed in relation to the course of authenticity was that they all starts up with some factual information that provides the listeners with some overall background knowledge in relation to the specific location of the story. Examples of such descriptions are the biography of the founder of a museum or a factory, introduction to a certain production form, the birth of a natural landscape and the like.²²⁸ Afterwards the combination of

²²² Susanne Overgaard, p. 7

²²³ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 1; Christian Konge, p. 2

²²⁴ Chresten, p. 1

²²⁵ Lindhart, p. 1-2

²²⁶ Jørgen Hansen, p. 8; Susanne Overgaard, p. 7

²²⁷ Jørgen Hansen, p. 8; Susanne Overgaard, p. 7

²²⁸ Observation #1-6

fiction and facts seems to depend on either the surroundings where telling stops are made or, as mentioned above, specific stories are initiated by the listeners' characteristics, interests and/or questions.

4.4. Engaging elements and dramaturgical principals

4.4.1. Story composition

In order for a story to catch and keep the attention of the reader – or in this case the listener – the story composition appears essential and references are often made to models such as The Actantial Model (Greimas) or the Model of Relating (Ola Olsson) (see e.g. Fog et al. 2003).

Each TL story arrangement takes its point of departure in an overall story frame which is highly rooted in the geographical or physical location – e.g. natural surroundings, part of a town, a company, a museum, a monastery etc. – and tells the story mostly with a historical and/or socio cultural perspective. The story consists of a number of shorter story parts making up a mix of factual telling and more fictive or personal constructed narratives and anecdotes (cf. 4.3). This means that the overall story often treats different aspects and themes which primarily are integrated through the location being a common denominator – a consistent and complete story line with just one beginning and one end is therefore difficult to identify.

However, in a theatrical perspective the location could be classified as the “scene” in which all the small stories take place and therefore they are connected in to some kind of common story line – in several instances a chronological composition appears or even the same characters may play a certain part throughout the whole story.²²⁹ During research, observations revealed stories where the chronological development of a company made up the story frame – starting at the foundation and ending with the present situation of the company²³⁰ while another story evolved around two historical and socio cultural groupings used as main cast throughout the story.²³¹ The latter even seemed to follow an overall action plan where tensions between two social classes represent a story conflict and build up a story in which elements such as introduction to the conflict, point of no return and finally an absolute climax can be identified (c.f. Fog et al. 2003, p. 44).²³² Despite that the story is continuously interrupted by factual information, the overall story line seems more or less to be followed through as the facts merely consists in historical and natural explanations of the background “scenery”. Nonetheless, if a general conclusion should be made on behalf of the observations that have been carried out this story appears to be the exception that proves the rule as none of the other stories revealed a clear-cut composition of the overall story.

The composition within the independent story parts, however, is a different matter. Especially – and not surprisingly – anecdotes and personal narratives often included more visible elements from traditional story composition than the delivering of factual information. As mentioned earlier (cf. 4.1.) a couple of TL storytellers accentuate drama as an efficient element in telling a good story²³³ which obviously seems to correlate with establishing a tension or a conflict that functions as the

²²⁹ Observations #1, 5 and 6 – see also story descriptions in Table 1 for further examples.

²³⁰ Observation 1 + 6

²³¹ Observation 5

²³² Observation 5

²³³ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 2; Chresten, p. 1

primary motive power of a good story. Besides that the listed “commandments” to the storytellers (cf. Fig. 5) recommends that the story is related to persons or events, which is also practiced in the TL stories, and thus suggests that stories are constructed around some characters or a course of events. However, the composition of the story parts – anecdotes and personal narratives – seems not to be the result of a deliberated act but far more to be ascribed to a rooted and cultural bound tradition of how a story is told as none of the storytellers mention story composition as a tool they have considered in order to tell a good story.

In light of a composition made up by a number of smaller story parts and/or telling stops, some storytellers use what could be classified as “cliffhangers”. One storyteller deliberately ends each telling stop with a short introduction to the next part of the story – e.g.: “...so the children had chores at home but besides that they had to go to school – and how that was I think we should all go over to the school and hear more about...”²³⁴ while in another story it seemed to be used more improvised when a subject came up outside context: “...but I’ll return to the subject when we make stop at...”²³⁵ In that way a certain connection between story parts seems to be created and the coherence between stage (location) and story is maintained. Furthermore, the “teasers” might even generate some expectation for the upcoming stories keeping the participants “in the story” – however, observing the participants gave no proof of such effect.

4.4.2. A sense of place

As mentioned earlier (cf. 4.2.3.), the majority of stories involve a walk with a number of telling stops along the route. The stops seems to be made in strategic places where the particular surroundings serve as point of departure for a story and in relation to a historical telling several storytellers attempt to paint a picture of how the location looked at the time the story takes place.²³⁶ In one of the stories observed by the researcher, the storyteller describes: “If you arrived here by ship in the 14th century you would see...”²³⁷ while pointing in the directions that the participants should look trying to create an image of place not only through the sense of hearing but also through sight. The same effect seems to be the intention in another story where a telling stop in made in a town square which was formerly a part of a factory ground and pointing out the location of former buildings seemed to provide the listeners with an idea of the real size of what once were.²³⁸

One storyteller accentuates the possibilities of not just telling but also showing the place to the participants as a great strength that can support the factual and authentic aspect of a story especially when physical evidences of historical facts are actually still present in the surroundings.²³⁹ In his telling a sense of authentic place is underlined documentarily by mentioning place names, pointing out directions and showing visual proves in the nature of e.g. peat cutting in order to illustrate that the main characters of the story actually lived their everyday life in this particular ground.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ Observation #5

²³⁵ Observation #1

²³⁶ Observations #1+2

²³⁷ Observation #2

²³⁸ Observation #1

²³⁹ Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁴⁰ Observation #5

The same effect is presumably possible when participants are allowed to “try out” the objects or enter buildings that are central to the story. One example of this appears at a museum where participants can get on the old trains and even lie down in the couchette carriages.²⁴¹ According to one of the storytellers, constructed scenes are also believed to play a supporting role when a story has to be communicated²⁴² and in this particular story participants are allowed to enter authentic buildings, moved and rebuilt in a museum context and decorated as a home or a school appeared about hundred years ago, so while stories about village life are told the participants sit at an old dining table in a farmers living room or at school forms in what appears to be an old classroom.²⁴³ Apparently this supplements the story with a feeling of being back stage the museum²⁴⁴ and at best a sense of being present in the historical stage of the stories might appear.

Furthermore, other properties with a less prominent role – e.g. a wooden clove, a rattan cane, old production tools etc.²⁴⁵ – are used as point of departure for stories about historical conditions and habits. In fact this seems comparable with the more classical museums approach where an object is used to explain historical facts; however the storytellers serve the information in a more vivid manner than a guest at a museum normally gets from reading a factual text attached to some object. In one story arrangement, participants were furthermore allowed to touch the object which again could be said to break with the facade of the museum “exhibition case”.

In other words, the telling of a story in several occasions seems to involve more than just the sense of hearing – but the senses of both seeing and touching apparently can be central and engaging parts of a story and using a theatrical metaphor, historical objects seems to some extent to be included as properties in the play of a story. Furthermore, it is believed to support authentic perspectives and might even enhance an authentic feeling despite the participants know that the set up is not authentic as it is the case of the abovementioned museum where the houses were not originally placed in this area or some of the objects were duplicates of an old craft, which is actually underlined during the story.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, none of the story arrangements, as we shall see in the following, seemed to aim at having the participants as actual co-creators of the story.

4.4.3. Attractive properties

As mentioned in the background description of TL, some of the stories explicitly promote that physical objects – such as a boat or a taste – supplement or stage the oral telling of a story and according to the number of visitors these stories seem to be rather popular (cf. 1.3.).

One of the actors behind the sailing story confirms this effect as he believes that people at all ages enjoy sailing; looking at the arrangement from this perspective sailing is believed to attract families with children to the story arrangement although the story itself is primarily directed to the adult audience.²⁴⁷ The impressions from observation of this story arrangement also seem to confirm this statement. Already aboard the boat, waiting for it to set off, expectations seemed to arise among the

²⁴¹ Story no. 28 (Netværk Limfjorden 2009, p. 25)

²⁴² Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁴³ Observation #5

²⁴⁴ Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁴⁵ Observation #5+6

²⁴⁶ Observation #5

²⁴⁷ Christian Konge, p. 1

participants – children as well as adults – and during the boat trip several participants also appeared to enjoy the natural scenery and the sail just as much as the actual story being told.²⁴⁸

It is predominantly the stories within the category “The Temptations of Limfjorden” that serve a taste of a local dish or self-made victuals and it may even be expected beforehand due to the theme, story titles and/or the characteristics of the storytelling actors. The owner of a diary also acknowledges that a taste of chocolate, beer, ice cream, snaps or whatever tastes nice without a doubt attracts people²⁴⁹ and the product coordinator of TL even believes – though said with a smile – that elements such as ice cream *involve* the listeners in the story.²⁵⁰ The observation of a story arrangement at the very same diary partly confirmed it; the story only takes the participants on a very brief walking tour through the factory before having a lecture while seated in rows and the handing out of ice cream right before the participants had to listen seemed very much to spread joy and even the children that had already showed sign of boredom were calmed down for a little while.²⁵¹ So tastes may presumably be a motivation or a draw to visit the story in the first place and in a way it could be stated, as the coordinator does, that some kind of involvement in the story takes place due to a taste of ice cream. Food and drink are also offered as refreshments in stories without any relation to what is actually served – e.g. in a story about gardening a cup of coffee and a piece of cake is served²⁵² and a historical storyteller offers the participants a cold soda or cider during one of the telling stops.²⁵³ Consequently, it seems reasonable to assume that a taste does to some extent involve the listener in the sense that it provides the story with another positive feature however, in occasion where no relation exist between the story content and the food or drink served, the taste doesn’t enhance the effect of the story but merely make up a refreshment and in order to keep the attention of the participants at the actual story and its content it is principally required that the telling itself is captivating.

Additionally properties could also serve as a souvenir that theoretically might prolong or revitalize the story after returning home (see e.g. Mossberg & Johansen, 2006) – a home-made salami from one of the farms, a special beer from a brewery or ice cream bought at a diary would presumably recall story elements while enjoying a taste at home. Apparently, no souvenirs of this kind are given to the participants instead are products merely offered for sale in own shops but according to one actor only very little is sold and he stresses that this is also not the purpose of telling stories (his mission is instead to create a positive image of dairy work to inspire more to educate within the trade)²⁵⁴ – and taking the number of visitors into consideration, telling stories doesn’t seem the most profitable way of marketing ones product. One story does provide the visitors with a recipe of how to make their own “snaps”²⁵⁵ but the effect that souvenirs is believed to have – i.e. prolonging the experience and promoting a word-of-mouth effect – are apparently not utilized within TL and seeing that apparently few guests buy the products, it could be assumed that giving participants a “take-away” taste would be an advantageous way to generate a “souvenir effect”.

²⁴⁸ Observation #3

²⁴⁹ Lindhart, p. 3

²⁵⁰ Gitte Skoubo, p. 7

²⁵¹ Observation #6

²⁵² Story no. 8 (Netværk Limfjorden 2009, p. 8)

²⁵³ Observation #5

²⁵⁴ Lindhart, p. 1

²⁵⁵ Story no. 32 (Netværk Limfjorden 2009, p. 8)

4.4.4. Involving activities

As we have seen above, the stimulation of the sight contributed with another dimension to the telling of a story (cf. 4.4.2.) and through the use of physical properties even further senses seem activated most notably the sense of taste. One nature counselor also stresses explicitly that he intends to have the participants use their senses, such as to smell, touch or taste something that he find during the walk²⁵⁶ – e.g. during the observed story arrangement he challenged people to hold their hand on top of an anthill or to eat a living ant.²⁵⁷

However, the main group of visitors in the TL stories – i.e. middle-aged and older couples – is seemingly unwilling to participate in this kind of activities. The same storyteller describes them as a segment that is very hard to activate compared to for example a group of children and for that reason activities are deliberately used to a lesser extent when telling a TL story which means that the main activation is predominantly to have the participant join in for a talk by asking questions rather than providing a monologue.²⁵⁸ This tendency also seemed to be confirmed during observation as only a younger couple (mid/late 20's) volunteered for the “ant challenges”.²⁵⁹

Similar type of activities appears during summer season in the sailing story: just before the boat sets off a biology student tells about the animal life in Limfjorden while the listeners are invited to participate by putting their hands in a tank with crabs and feel them. Several visitors took the opportunity to hold a crab though mainly children with their parents and/or grandparents. Furthermore relatively few of the “active listeners” at the biology session participated in the following TL story.²⁶⁰

Not surprisingly, activation apparently cannot be forced upon a group of participants that doesn't feel the urge for this form of involvement in order to have a good story and naturally the level and type of involvement therefore has to be considered according to the actual visitors. However, luring them in to trying something new might guide them towards an experience that could turn out to be a pleasant surprise after all – i.e. by generating a feeling of overcoming a challenge – though the balance between tempting and pushing may be very subtle and should possibly be handled with caution.

Despite the fact that activities to some extent appears as incorporated part of several stories, only one story mentions it explicitly in the pamphlet/website description of the stories; a historical telling about a society built up around fishing informs that participants are offered the opportunity to learn how to make a seine or catch shrimps.²⁶¹ The low degree of market communication about the fact that apparently several stories often include some kind of activity might be another indication of that activities are not considered an attraction in relation to the target group and visitors of TL stories.

²⁵⁶ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3

²⁵⁷ Observation # 4

²⁵⁸ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3

²⁵⁹ Observation #4

²⁶⁰ Observation #3

²⁶¹ Story no. 17 (Netværk Limfjorden 2009, p. 14)

4.4.5. Costumes and acting

When asking the storytellers about dramaturgical principles, the majority thinks of dressing up and perform a play for the visitors. However, this form of acting doesn't play a prevalent role in the TL stories. One storyteller tells that he has tried dressing up but felt that the story became impersonal as it was no longer him telling the story but he does consider acting as a suitable tool in relation to storytelling though stressing that it demands both natural talents and the right audience if it has to work properly – and his story has neither.²⁶²

Apparently only in one of the TL stories the storyteller dresses up: dressed in pants of homespun wool that are too short, an old shirt with a large patch, a felted hat, a bottle of snaps hanging in a string around the neck and walking bare-footed (though wearing wooden shoes if the weather is cold) he intends to have it look like it is a “*rakker*” – the main historical characters in the story – telling the story about living conditions as “outlaws” in the area.²⁶³ The storyteller considers it an important part of the story as it gives the participants a clearer picture of the characters in the story and animates telling much more than if he simply showed up in his green nature outfit as a nature counsellor.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, by putting on a costume he wants to signal that he takes the story one step further than just the telling of it²⁶⁵ and some times during the telling of the story he even refers to *rakkerne* as “we” – e.g. “*back then we had...*”.²⁶⁶ Already when arriving, several participants commented on the costumes and asked questions in relation to especially the bottle hanging around his neck and in this way the peculiar look of the storyteller seemingly helped to break the ice between the storyteller and the listeners and consequently it might have promoted another of the storyteller's intentions – i.e. to create a good relationship to the participant so they dare ask questions during the story.²⁶⁷

Although this is the only TL story that uses some clear aspects of “traditional” theatrical components one of the storytellers tells that it has been practiced in another context; a storytelling event in an agricultural museum – an old farm – was set up as a movie that by means of acting and costumes told a story about life in the countryside. The whole story was completely fictional but although the participants were informed of its fictitious character and the content was so exaggerated that it without a doubt appeared as nothing else but a good cock-and-bull story, visitors turned out to be so engaged in the story that some had the impression that the story was authentic – but what was more important: the participants got interested in the topic and asked a lot of questions in contrary to what is the “normal conditions” of an agricultural museum where it can be very difficult to attract people.²⁶⁸ Despite the success, the arrangement is not used within TL and one impediment might be that it involves a lot of people which makes it difficult to mobilize each week throughout a season.

4.4.6. Are they engaged...?

As it appears from the sections above it seems that several storytellers engage the visitors in the story by involving other senses such as sight, touch, taste and smell. This indicates that storytellers

²⁶² Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3

²⁶³ Dan Hansen, p. 3; Observation #5

²⁶⁴ Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁶⁵ Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁶⁶ Observation #5

²⁶⁷ Dan Hansen, p. 3

²⁶⁸ Susanne Overgaard, p. 7

conceive a good story as consisting in more than the mere listening and the visitors of TL could therefore be assumed to take part not only as listeners but also as spectators and maybe even participants or actors of the story.

The general visitor participation seems still to be concentrated on a talk-and-listen relationship; the story is meant to catch their attention, make them interested in the topic of the story and consequently have them ask questions or subsequently look for further information on their own. However, during observations visitors seemed to ask relatively few questions and the stories therefore turned out to be mainly one-way communication with a storyteller delivering a tale to a group of listeners and in general it was mainly between the telling stops that visitors became active participants in the sense that they addressed the storyteller, mutually discussed the topic and/or talked about other matters. Even in the story arrangement where costumes were actually used the group of visitors didn't seem involved much further than listening to the story and as one storyteller suggests, it might be problematic to involve them more actively due to the characteristics of the main target group of the present TL stories.²⁶⁹ In other words, the stories do not engage the participants as actors or co-creators of the story and only in story arrangements where the telling succeed in generating storytelling among the guests and/or questions that guide the storyteller in an unforeseen direction, it could be justified to some extent to classify the participants as co-writers.

4.5. Product development – considerations about the future

As mentioned earlier, TL is still considered a product within a development phase and beside the continuous progress of the product – such as changing themes and choosing stories²⁷⁰ – more radical considerations for future development initiatives are also made; stakeholders and actors consider TL as a solid foundation and a product with the potential of becoming a stronger tourist attraction in itself, though, at the same time it is acknowledged that this certainly demand further developments and implementations of new initiatives.²⁷¹

A new collaborative project – *Nordjyske Fortællinger*²⁷² – with participation from the regional DMO, *VisitNordjylland*, and *Netværk Limfjorden*, has recently been launched with the main purpose of digitalizing stories, enhancing the number of stories in other languages and developing new stories with point of departure in local industries. The project is, however, still at a preliminary stage; a meeting was held late June 2009 with the purpose of finishing the overall project description and, according to plan, stakeholders are about to enter into an agreement about the details (September 2009). The implementation is set for the spring 2010 and for that reason the final outcomes of the project are still not clarified but parallels between TL stakeholders and actors' considerations about product development and the intentions of this project will however be made in the following paragraphs.

4.5.1. Stories in a foreign language

Since the TL stories saw the light of the day for the first time, it has been the intention to provide some of the stories to foreign tourists as well – i.e. telling stories in German and English – and how

²⁶⁹ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 3

²⁷⁰ Gitte Skoubo, p. 1; Susanne Overgaard, p. 5

²⁷¹ Dina Overgaard, p. 4; Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Gitte Skoubo, p. 7, Jørgen Hansen, p. 9;

²⁷² Based on the minutes of a stakeholder meeting (30.06.09), the project description (07.07.09) and the final liaison document (21.08.09)

this could be done is still discussed continuously as one of the main issues concerning product development.²⁷³ At first glance, it seems a relatively tangible matter to accomplish but concerns about the quality of the product and lack of proficiency in languages seems to be some of the reasons why so far this progress still hasn't been implemented.

The new project of stories in Northern Jutland intend to survey possible barriers and possibilities for the enhancement of stories in foreign languages – primarily German, secondary English – and to test different methods of implementation, e.g. involving university students at linguistic studies in order to work out translated manuscript and/or to perform synchronic interpretation at the actual story arrangement.²⁷⁴ According to the product coordinator of TL, one of the problems in developing stories in other languages is the actors' concern for a decline of "storytelling effect" because some of the "quibbles" might be lost in translation²⁷⁵ – e.g. irony and sarcasm²⁷⁶ as well as use of dialects²⁷⁷ are elements that storytellers stresses as difficult to convert. One storyteller has previously had to tell stories with an interpreter and he clearly proclaims that this way of telling effects the quality of the story.²⁷⁸

Hence, a main problem is the lack of language proficiency among the storytellers; this may be solved by memorising a word-by-word manuscript but if foreign tourists are to have a story of the same quality as the Danish visitors it is undoubtedly necessary that storytellers master the language.²⁷⁹ In order to establish proficiency, educating the storytellers seems an obvious means and two directions are suggested by stakeholders as possible ways to develop the required skills; either the present storytellers could be taught in German and English²⁸⁰ or people with knowledge in foreign language could be engage as storytellers and trained in basic technical knowledge of the story context²⁸¹, i.e. characteristics of history, culture or nature. This might be practicable in some stories but one storyteller does however accentuate that a story with a lot of technical terms involved require both an *extensive* knowledge of foreign language and *considerable* competences within the professional field.²⁸² Thus, in some cases very comprehensive training of the storyteller seems necessary if the foreign tourists are to be given a story rather than a guided tour. Besides that, the sense of belonging to a place or a trade seems an important factor that influences on the personal enthusiasm and involvement of the storytellers and these emotional elements of telling a story cannot immediately be transferred to an "outsider".

Stakeholders within TL are aware of that it might not be all stories that – at least not at first – are suitable for foreigners so the first step towards application would be to start up with those stories that are found most adequate.²⁸³ At the beginning of this season (2009), the network committee asked all actors whether or not they at the moment would be able to provide a story – or part of it – in German and English²⁸⁴ and according to plan the website will from next season be available for

²⁷³ Jørgen Hansen, p. 12; Gitte Skoubo, p. 4

²⁷⁴ Nordjyske Fortællinger 2009, p. 3

²⁷⁵ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4-5 + Meeting 18.05.09

²⁷⁶ Lindhart, p. 4

²⁷⁷ Dan Hansen, p. 4

²⁷⁸ Lindhart, p. 4

²⁷⁹ Jørgen Hansen, p. 12

²⁸⁰ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

²⁸¹ Dina Overgaard, p. 6

²⁸² Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 4

²⁸³ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Jørgen Hansen, p. 12; Gitte Skoubo, meeting 18.05.09

²⁸⁴ Gitte Skoubo, p. 4

foreigners and publish in which story arrangements the storyteller is capable of providing a translation of the story content.²⁸⁵ Naturally, this is not believed to be the optimum solution as several stakeholders and actors announce that the stories would lose their vivid character if they were to be delivered in several languages at the time²⁸⁶ – “it would simply turn it into a sightseeing excursion.”²⁸⁷ Nonetheless, it could turn out very difficult to gather sufficient German or English-speaking tourists for the story arrangements to be held in three different versions.²⁸⁸ Generally, the stakeholders and actors of TL do trust that it could be sold – though one storyteller doesn’t think that the Germans would find such product interesting as they come merely to spend time together within their family²⁸⁹ – and one stakeholder suggests that special packages should be developed by adjusting suitable stories according to the specific demand of the foreign tourists.²⁹⁰

4.5.2. Use of digital media

One of the principal intentions with the new project *Nordjyske Fortællinger* is to develop digitalized story arrangements in form of podcasts and the main reasons are that digital stories can be told independent of time or place and don’t require a certain number of participants which gives the opportunity to enhance the offerings of stories outside the main season.²⁹¹

According to the product coordinator, this step toward a modernization of the product has also been considered within TL²⁹² but asking questions about possible product development, digitalizing of the stories doesn’t seem to be considered among actors and storytellers as particularly no one mention it as an opportunity. One may assume that concerns about losing the personal touch in form of face-to-face contact and the living aspect such as adjustment of the story according to a specific group of listeners (cf. 4.2.4.) could be some important impediments to not implementing technologies in replacement of the “real” storyteller. One stakeholder also explicitly expresses her resistance: “If we are to maintain a living storyteller it is no good to just slip some kind of record player into the visitors’ hands and leave them with a plain tape recording.”²⁹³

Within the new development project, these concerns are taken into account as it is discussed whether new initiatives such as using professional actors, sound effects and music as tools in the telling of the story in order to maintain the atmosphere of the story or having the “real storyteller” be the one telling the story via digital medias to keep the original “twinkle”, dialect etc.²⁹⁴

Furthermore, recordings are considered as marketing tool in form of small teasers of short extracts of the stories put on the internet or used it in commercials on the radio²⁹⁵ which in fact is a step in the direction of more and better marketing which several TL actors wish for (cf. 3.3.5.).

²⁸⁵ Jørgen Hansen, p. 12

²⁸⁶ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Dina Overgaard, p. 6; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3; Chresten, p. 3

²⁸⁷ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3

²⁸⁸ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3; Dan Hansen, p. 4

²⁸⁹ Henrik Kjær Bach, p. 4

²⁹⁰ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

²⁹¹ Nordjyske Fortællinger 2009, p. 2

²⁹² Gitte Skoubo, meeting 18.05.09

²⁹³ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

²⁹⁴ Nordjyske Fortællinger 2009, p. 2

²⁹⁵ Nordjyske Fortællinger 2009, p. 2

4.5.3. Improve season extension

As mentioned (cf. 3.6.), TL stories are for the first time presented outside the main season, though, not all stories are available in spring and fall. However, one stakeholder believe that this is exactly how TL – and Limfjorden in general – should position itself but mentions that it does set up different rules concerning the selection of stories seeing that many actors cannot provide a story for an extended period – e.g. storytelling in museums might need to be excluded due to changing exhibitions.²⁹⁶

Another stakeholder stresses that one of the main problems in prolonging the telling period as it appears today is that you cannot bind storytellers to provide a story once a week all year and therefore a necessary initiative would be to develop supplements directed especially towards all year visits.²⁹⁷ One way of solving this could be the suggestion of digitalizing stories made within the new project *Nordjyske Fortællinger*. Yet other ideas for development projects are present within TL where offering stories on booking to groups are considered as an offering to party tours, i.e. associations or companies going on a one-day trip, to make reservation on a story in the area of an excursion.²⁹⁸ The first steps towards implementation are already taken as contact has been made to a couple of bus companies²⁹⁹ and a list of the story arrangements open for groups has recently been put on the website of the network of Limfjorden. In the long term, though, it may require a set up that is more appropriate to handle the reservations.³⁰⁰

Furthermore, both within TL and in relation to the new development project *Nordjyske Fortællinger* the possibility of involving additional commercial factories and companies outside the tourism sector as storytelling actors are considered as potential providers of stories outside summer season though at this point it merely consists in an examination of how barriers to such initiative could be overcome.³⁰¹

4.5.4. New packages – new target groups

As it appears, the product so far is mainly aimed at individuals – couples or families – notably middle-aged or elderly couples with interest in cultural aspects (cf. 3.5.). Not surprisingly, proposals for future product development seem to concern how to draw new target groups and besides providing stories in other languages, adding new themes and/or packages of stories appear prevalent among stakeholders and actors.

New story themes are believed to be one of the opportunities to catch the attention of different segments. In order to attract families with children, one actor suggests that stories exclusively minded for children could be developed around themes such as fairytales and legends or thrill and horror – acknowledging that it demands an enormous effort to catch the attention of children.³⁰² Another thematic course that has been considered are more stories directed at food and drinks where the visitors besides a story get to taste some of the many tempting foods cultivated and

²⁹⁶ Dina Overgaard, p. 6

²⁹⁷ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

²⁹⁸ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; Jørgen Hansen, p. 9

²⁹⁹ Jørgen Hansen, p. 9

³⁰⁰ Jørgen Hansen, p. 9

³⁰¹ Susanne Overgaard, p. 8; *Nordjyske Fortællinger*, p. 3

³⁰² Susanne Overgaard, p. 8

available in and around the fiord.³⁰³ As a step in that direction a storyteller suggests that hotels could be involved in TL by inviting tourists to a dinner made from local groceries served with a story from one of the suppliers.³⁰⁴

This touches upon the issue about offering packages in cooperation with providers of accommodations and, as mentioned, in the beginning this it was actually one of the intentions of TL that hotels and inns should be a part of the product through the offering of tourist packages that included overnight stays and tickets for a number of stories. The involvement of accommodations is still considered;³⁰⁵ in agreement with the original purpose one storyteller believes that including tickets in accommodation products – e.g. the rental of holiday cottages – would actually inspire the tourists to visit the stories and increase the number of participants at the arrangements.³⁰⁶ The product coordinator suggests that for example the inns – especially those already being part of The Route of Snaps (cf. 2.1)³⁰⁷ – could be engaged not only as overnight stay but as a story in itself but at the same time she expresses concern in relation to convince the inn owners of being part of TL.³⁰⁸ Thus, it seems as if the issue advances around the fact that TL is not considered an attraction neither by product stakeholders nor by inn owners, the latter then missing an incentive to get involved though they might be the linkage to create a greater attraction in the first place.

In relation to the abovementioned focus on stories provided to groups, one stakeholder tells about a project³⁰⁹ where a number of different actors, including accommodation, attractions, restaurants etc., are involved in offering complete tour packages to bus operators and it is believed that TL would be evident to embrace as partner.³¹⁰ This would mean that a tailor made product is established as an independent attraction in form of a party tour that includes almost anything that the tourist will need to be in contact with and TL could be incorporated as an experience element.

Another perspective that is brought up in relation to packing is establishing TL stories as a tourist offer directed towards specific forms of vacationing – e.g. stories could be offered to cycling or yachting tourists and might inspire them to move from one story to another in their circular tour in the area of Limfjorden.³¹¹ This is stressed by one stakeholder as an issue that concerns the development of tourism in general as focus should be more on connecting evident forms of vacationing instead of letting geographical boundaries be a restriction to development of better tourist products.³¹² Whether cyclists or yachtsmen can be considered two homogenous groups in relation to which kind of stories they would prefer seems however questionable and it might be more suitable as a marketing tool.

³⁰³ Gitte Skoubo, p. 7; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 4

³⁰⁴ Lindhart, p. 4

³⁰⁵ Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3; Gitte Skoubo, p. 7

³⁰⁶ Anna Noe Bovin, p. 3

³⁰⁷ www.snapseruten.dk

³⁰⁸ Gitte Skoubo, p. 7

³⁰⁹ Probus

³¹⁰ Dina Overgaard, p. 5

³¹¹ Dina Overgaard, p. 5; Dan Hansen, p. 5

³¹² Dina Overgaard, p. 5

5. *Conclusions and main findings*

The present case study has investigated the tourist product *The Tales of Limfjorden* where a number of different actors tell 34 different stories each week throughout the main tourist seasons. The individual stories all relate to local characteristics in the particular destination but within the overall product frame they are gathered in five different themes: history, nature, craft and industry, the maritime and temptations.

The purpose of the case description has first and foremost been to examine how storytelling is understood and implemented within a Danish tourism context. Besides that, organisational and network related issues concerning the management and coordination of TL has been object to further investigations and considerations about the influence of the product within the frame of destination development of Limfjorden in general have also been made. Consequently, the case description has been concentrated on the following three main topics: Organisation and network, destination development, and last but not least the understanding and application of storytelling.

Organisation and network

The TL product is established within a geographical area that stretches in to two political regions, involves a number of local destinations and includes many different public as well as private actors and stakeholders. At management level the product of TL is handled within *Netværk Limfjorden*, a network association whose main purpose is to develop and promote tourism in the area of Limfjorden. The network is managed by a committee consisting of public and private tourism stakeholders and political representatives. At the moment, TL is the most important project and is still considered a developing product. After some turbulence due to a new political reform that changed the field of responsibility of the regional DMO in Northern Jutland, the product is now coordinated by the local Tourism Agency in Struer while an employee at the Region of Central Jutland functions as secretary, handling all administrative tasks. The organisational structure of the network means that the coordinator and the secretary have to handle all product coordination and administration as part time jobs besides fulfilling their main jobs as director of tourism and regional employee respectively and a wish for a more formalized organization structure integrating an independent secretariat is expressed by a number of stakeholders within the network.

Naturally, TL involves a number of actors providing the actual telling of stories. The actors make up a diverse group of organisations counting tourist attractions (e.g. historical museums, nature parks etc.) and companies from other business sectors (e.g. dairy, brewery, farms); big, small and micro sized organisations and a mixture of public and private companies. The storytellers are chosen by the tourist agencies in the particular local destinations and the selection is primarily based on whether the story represent something unique and extraordinary within the given destination area. Whether a story turns out successfully is judged by the number of visitors during a season, and the represented stories within the different themes and destinations may vary from one season to the next; however a relative high number of stories appear to be told for several years. While the tourist agencies have to pay for the actual number of stories they want to be a part of TL, the storytelling actors are not required any payment, they get to keep all income from entrance fees of the story arrangements and obtain increased marketing exposure through the promotional pamphlet, press releases and the joint website – nonetheless this do no show as motive for entering as actor in TL but instead appears to be a low interest in becoming a storyteller which could be due

to the risk of failing visitor numbers and the demand for providing a story each week throughout the season.

The internal communication of the network indicated that it mainly functions top-down. An external communicative secretary has been hired to maintain the communication of the network such as regular newsletters, press releases and a new website which has increased the internal flow of information that is believed to make network activities more visible to stakeholders and actors. However, only limited information passes the other way – from the actors to stakeholder and management level of TL. This mainly occurs in the annual evaluation meeting in which far from every actor is represented and the low attendance among the storytelling actors is in fact accepted by the stakeholders as they consider the meetings as time and resource consuming for storytellers who already invest a lot of resources in just telling the stories. Consequently, stakeholders as well as actors do not seem to consider mutual communication as a central element and the only motivator for active involvement in the network presumably comes down to the interest of the individual and his/her enthusiasm for the cooperative aspects which a large share of storytellers do not consider important for the telling and/or selling of their particular story. A low sense of ownership for the overall product seems dominant and personal relationships appear only to exist among those regularly attending the meetings and primarily at management/committee level of the network causing that decisions are mainly made at stakeholder level causing a one-way communication flow where several actors are mere recipients of definite information and guidelines.

Destination development

The local destinations around Limfjorden are naturally connected by the water and it seems a very reasonable initiative to join actors and destinations within the framework of a common tourist product in order to develop the area as one tourist destination and one of the fundamental ideas behind the TL initiative is to attract more tourists to the entire area of Limfjorden. Despite a common TL promotional pamphlet presenting all the stories as one product, a dominant position in the joint website and a number of press releases sent to national, regional and local newspapers, the product is still a niche product that mainly functions as a supplementary offer to the tourists visiting the area. Hence, although TL might result in some word-of-mouth effect as a consequence of providing a good experience to its visitors, it does not in itself attract additional or new tourists to the area and in terms of enhancing incoming tourism within the area TL has not so far contributed directly to the development of Limfjorden as a tourist destination. Despite that several stakeholders and actors believe that more marketing would be a way to solve this, the narrow target group of TL – i.e. middle aged / older Danish couples travelling without children – seemingly also influence on the scanty pull effect of the product. In order to obtain status as an independent tourist attraction, TL has to be developed further and considerations related to this particular issue are also made among stakeholders as stories provided in other languages, by use of digital media and story arrangement offered to groups are planned initiative that are to be implemented next season. Besides that it might be worth promoting and developing stories that would be attractive to a dominant segment within Danish tourism – families with children – in order to establish TL as an independent tourist attraction.

Seen from an organisational and a collaborative perspective, stakeholders believe that the network has contributed to more solidarity among the different destinations around Limfjorden and the new website clearly furthers the appearance of Limfjorden as one destination. Nonetheless the distribution of TL stories reveals that the network does not cover the whole area but is clearly

centered at the western end of the fiord, not involving the two major municipalities Aalborg and Viborg, and the product thus only partly has established Limfjorden as one destination. Although stakeholders and actors seem to agree that TL to some extent have joined together the localities and destinations around Limfjorden as one destination, the lack of engagement in the network cooperation, of strong personal relationships and of ownership feeling towards the overall product appear impediments in relation to developing an integrated destination. Furthermore, research revealed that concerning issues related to the TL product in general were in several occasions addressed by focusing on the specific local destination or the individual actor's own product rather than TL as one consistent whole and hence, the general picture of TL is that it hardly classifies Limfjorden as one united destination but several destinations collaborating and gathering independent tourist products in a common concept.

The product set up has the intention to present a number of stories integrated geographically or thematically so that tourist are inspired to visit more than one telling either by settling in one local destination and attend stories from different themes or pursuing a specific theme across destinations around Limfjorden. In practice, however, statistics show that only a minor part of the visitors actually visit more than one story. One reason might be the fact that only a few storytellers seem to promote or recommend the other stories. Besides that the different story themes apparently do not foster an integrated story product either; the settled themes – history, industry, nature etc. – leave a very broad scope for telling a story and presumably they do not inspire the tourist to follow a “thematic route” of stories. In order to promote that routes of stories are followed, the stories seemingly have to be more integrated and the linkage between the individual stories more visible.

Understanding and application of storytelling

Within TL, storytelling is practiced in that a storyteller delivers a tale by word-of-mouth to a group of listeners and basically storytelling is conceived a tool to communicate knowledge and authentic information in an interesting and appealing way. Drama, humour and a mixture of facts and fiction together with personal telling appear as the primary building blocks in creating a good story that gets to people and is something they will remember. This means, that although the stories are founded in historical facts and authentic reality, fictive elements such as anecdotes, tall stories and legends are clearly being used to gain advantages in relation to delivering a good story; it “spices up” the story and makes cultural history become more alive, exciting, relevant and colourful and secures that tourists are not (just) being given a guided tour. The historical facts do not only steam from historical documents and publications but are often based on personal tales, told by people living in the area, and mixed with the storytellers' own perspectives and personality.

The TL storytellers make up a diverse group of people with very different backgrounds but at the same time characteristics such as passion and enthusiasm for telling their particular story are common denominators that often originate in professional pride and the “belonging” to a place which seem to advance a personal engagement in the telling of a story. Thus, a good story is not just about its content but also about the way it is told. Apparently the majority of storytellers also promote this aspect by taking point of departure in the particular group listening to the story and adjusting the story according to the specific segments, interests and backgrounds of the participants, e.g. by addressing the children with a particular story. Although the changes presumably merely contains a selection of one anecdote in preference of another, the storytellers do insist in not having a final manuscript for their story seeing that it endangers the liberty of the storyteller and makes the story rigid and boring – not only to the audience but also to the storyteller that risk losing his/her

engagement in telling the story if it became merely routine. Another important aspect of personality lies in the relationship between the storyteller and the listeners where friendly and personal contact to the listeners is essential in order to capture their attention and encourage them to participate by asking questions.

Besides asking questions, other aspects of engagement and involvement appear as well. Most stories involve a walk with a number of telling stops along the route and during the small breaks, i.e. walking from one place to another, the participants often start telling on their own, talking and socializing with other participants as well as the storyteller and one of the main purposes of telling the stories is in fact to make the tourist interested in the topic and to pass the story on to others or even seek further information on their own. The stories furthermore often take point of departure in the physical location and surroundings where several storytellers attempt to paint a picture of how the place looked like at the time the story takes place, pointing out directions or spots of interest and in other stories, participants are furthermore allowed to try out objects or enter buildings that are central to the story. Hence, several stories seems to involve more than just the sense of hearing but also the senses of seeing and touching and using the surroundings as part of the story might even foster an authentic sense of being present in the historical stage of the stories – a sense of place.

In some stories, other properties and activities also enter the story stage. In one occasion, the story is told while sailing down a narrow canal and in others, tastes of drink and/or food are offered either as an integrated part of the story (being a product of the storytelling company) or as mere refreshment independent of the story content. The food/drink served in relation to the actual story seems to contribute to the story content and may even enhance the effect of the story. The product is often offered for sale at the place but besides that it is not actively promoted as a souvenir in that no “take-home” products is given to the participants in order to prolong the experience and create a word-of-mouth effect.

Some storytellers have tried involving the listeners through activities but compared to families with children, the main group of visitors at the TL stories – middle-aged and older couples – is apparently unwilling to participate actively and prefer listening with the opportunity for asking questions as the only involvement. Only in one story the storyteller dresses up as the main historical character of his story, and he believes that it animates the telling – another storyteller agrees that theatrical elements are suitable for telling a story but stresses that it requires another audience and that the storyteller has a natural talent for acting which are the reasons why he doesn't.

As it appears, several storytellers intend to engage the visitors by involving other senses such as sight, touch, taste and smell and a good story is conceived a telling that uses fictive elements to spice up the content; this seemingly result in stories with a stronger emotional appeal than a traditional guided tour and is apparently one of the main reasons why the tales told around Limfjorden can be classified as good stories. However, the general visitor participation is still concentrated on a talk-and-listen relationship where the story aims at catching the attention of the listener, make them interested in the topic and consequently have them ask questions, telling themselves and/or even look for further information. The stories do not engage the participants as actors or co-creators of the story – only in occasions where the guests participate and contribute to the story with his/her own story or guide the storyteller in an unforeseen direction, it could be justified to classify the participants as co-writers but this kind of engagement it is not judged to be the general picture of a TL story.

In order to tell stories that would be attractive to families with children, it would be necessary that the stories facilitate a good experience for both parents and children. At the moment children are obviously very bored when attending of the TL story arrangements and even though some of the stories involve some kind of appealing property to children such as a sail or an ice cream, the actual storytelling only has an emotionally appeal for the adult audience – the story being exciting, funny, interesting etc. A profitable way to engage the children in the story might be to involve them physically and make them co-creators of the story and of the experience. At the same time, parents most likely would be able to listen to and enjoy a good story. Stories that also capture the attention of the families with children consequently get the attention of a much broader group of tourists than it is the case today and most likely promote TL as an independent tourist attraction.

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